Stories of Swiss Children

by

Johanna Spyri

STORIES OF SWISS CHILDREN

Merry Xmas 1940

Barbara

STEFELI ALWAYS SPREAD OUT THEIR LUNCH UNDER THE ASH TREE

STORIES OF SWISS CHILDREN

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI

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Translated by

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CONTENTS

FRANCESCA AT HINTERWALD

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The School in Hinterwald	11
II.	The School-teacher	24
III.	The New Post	30
IV.	The Accused	52
V.	No Light Yet	69
VI.	The Discovery	80
VII.	Tumult and Peace in Hinterwald	109

THE FAIRY OF INTRA

I.	A Garden on Lago Maggiore	137
II.	On The Mountains in Unterland	141
III.	With Uncle Aloys	158
IV.	Renzeli Learns Many New Things	174
V.	A New Line of Business	194
VI.	In a Distant Garden	215

GAY LITTLE HERBLI

I.	Herbli is Born	231
II.	Herbli's First Days as an Artist	245
III.	Herbli Makes a Halt	256
IV.	A Second Acquaintance in Lowwater	269
V.	Herbli Turns Nurse	285
VI.	After Ten Years	311

FRANCESCA AT HINTERWALD

FRANCESCA AT HINTERWALD

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL IN HINTERWALD

The name of Hinterwald was given to a hamlet of small houses spread over the green mountain slopes and here and there beside the narrow path which led up to the pass from Kandersteg. These small wooden houses stood widely separated from each other and seemed very quiet and solitary. The tiniest of them clung to the very edge of the precipice and had long ago seemed ready to fall to pieces. Here a pale woman sat one dark autumn evening with a small boy on her lap. Holding her hands folded over his, she was praying aloud:

"In my need I cry to Thee
Spite of all transgression,
Have Thou pity, Lord, on me,
Hear my soul's confession!

"Leave me not to lonely grief,
Lost in mortal blindness!
Grant, O God, the sweet relief
Of Thy loving-kindness!

"Give me but one ray of hope
To dispel my sorrow!
From the night wherein I grope
To a joyous morrow!"

She now got up and led the little one to her miserable bed, which stood so near his little bedstead that he could easily climb in from hers. The woman was already so weak that she could barely help him up and but a few days later she had ceased to suffer and they took her away in a miserable cart down to her funeral in the village. Behind her went a man of uncouth appearance, dressed in a black, shabby coat which hung loosely round his person. This man was known in these parts under the name of Hedge-Hannes. At the corner of the hut the little boy sat and looked with big eyes at the slowly retreating cart, covered with a large black cloth. More than once the women who stood in their doorways and gazed

at the carriage exclaimed, "If only she could have taken the boy with her!"

Hinterwald had no church, and whoever was either christened or buried had to be taken all the way down to the distant village. Whenever people who lived there wished to attend divine service, they also had to descend, and for such as lived as high up as the Alps the way was so long that they very seldom got to the village. In winter when the snow reached up to the windows of the little houses it was difficult for even the most vigorous men to get down to the lower houses of the settlement. It was, therefore, quite impossible to send the children to the village school in winter-time. As school in the village was suspended in summer, the children in Hinterwald got no instruction at all during the first years of the place. At last, however, the fathers of the little settlement decided to start a school of their own, for it would be very inconvenient if no one in the community could read and write. For this purpose they built a little wooden structure, which was so small that

the benches had to be pushed quite close together. This, however, made it much warmer in winter. Above the schoolroom a tiny apartment was prepared for the teacher, consisting of a bedroom, a living room and a little kitchen overlooking the mountain at the back. Under the kitchen was another apartment which all the fathers in the community considered strictly necessary. Having no window it was pitch dark, and the clay floor made it extremely disagreeable. Here the rebellious boys and perhaps even girls were to be made docile and obedient. Without such a correction-hole boys like their own, all the fathers thought, could never be kept in order. Just now six men were sitting in the schoolroom, gazing solemnly at the empty benches in front of them. This room was used for all meetings which had to do with the welfare of the community, and today it was most suitable to have such an assembly here because they were discussing the selection of a new teacher. The school-master who had undertaken the first post in Hinterwald more than twenty years ago had died half a year pre-

viously. He had been old when he came, for no young man desired the place. The children in these parts had always been pretty wild, and since their last long holiday they had grown so savage that all the parents clamored for another teacher. But their desire remained unfulfilled: No teachers whatever seemed to be available. This was not true, however, for there were many in that profession, and there were always new ones every year. The trouble was that no one wished to come to such a solitary spot as Hinterwald. Others again feared the wild, neglected children. They would have no peace here and they would only be tormented half to death by a set of little scapegraces let loose upon them. Hinterwald, unfortunately, had such a reputation and no teacher could therefore be found.

Finally, when all hope was given up and everyone had decided to send the children to school again in the village, which was equal to an everlasting holiday, at last an application came. It was not from a man, but from a woman. Today was Sunday, the only day

for sitting, and the letter had come the week before. The first voice in the matter was given to the watchman, a personage common to every village. It was hard to say exactly what this official had to watch, but people came to him in troubles of different sorts, and he went to community meetings in the village when divers matters were discussed there. After having silently shaken his head several times, while nobody else offered an opinion, he at last said slowly: "How could a woman manage our boys? Even our girls are worse than the wildest boys in other places. How could a woman help us, I ask?"

"Better than nothing at all," thoughtfully said a man called the Ober-Metzler, the watchman's neighbor, after a long silence.

"That's what I think, too," agreed another.

"She'll be able to read and write at least, which is the chief point," opined the Unter-Metzler.

"I agree with them, too," said his neighbor.

"She'll be able to keep the upper hand with the help of the correction-hole," said another

man by the name of Metzler who lived by the stream. As his three boys were by far the wildest ones, that feature of the school gave him great satisfaction. Here the boys might be tamed without his laying hands on them himself.

"At least we can try it," the last man agreed, "and if it doesn't work, I suppose we can get rid of the little woman without the use of force."

This decision appealed to everybody, and it was settled to recommend the school-mistress to the other members of the community.

"Next we must discuss what is to be done with Hedge-Hannes's boy," the watchman began again, adding that one after another should say what he had accomplished in the matter.

The answer was the same from all the men. However hard they had tried to find the boy a permanent home, no one wished to have him. Every family had been asked and had refused even when more money had been promised for his board and lodging than was usually paid.

Some said their children were bad enough without taking anybody into their house who would just make them worse. Others thought that the lad had only mischief in his head and might even set fire to the house where he was living. It was well known to everyone that the boy did not only stroll about all day, but even disappeared at night, nobody knew where. This seemed so suspicious that several people even grew to believe the boy more dangerous than his father, for the father had in the end been so disabled that not much strength had been left to him to carry out his vicious threats. The eleven-year-old lad, on the contrary, was not so bad in his intentions, but these were growing stronger all the time.

"If that is the state of affairs," said the watchman, "only one way is now left open; the boy must get his food now here, now there, and he'll have to work wherever he is eating. Of course it is understood then that no one shall be richer for the boy's support, as the burden is evenly divided. The community can make a little gain by this arrangement."

"Where shall he sleep?" growled the Unter-Metzler. To have the boy with him every few weeks without being paid did not please him.

This was another difficult question. Where could such a place be found? To prepare a different lodging every night for the boy and let everybody share the burden was entirely out of the question. That would only encourage the boy in his roamings. Besides, most people would object to this arrangement and not want to have him. But the Unter-Metzler had an idea. Above his goat-stable, which was not built like most others close to the house, was a loft where the straw for the animals was kept. This was never stacked too high, and it would be easy enough to fix a couch here for the boy. In winter the goats below made it comfortably warm and the holes were stuffed with straw, while in summer it was airy enough when all the holes were open. He supposed this timely help would be worth a little sum from the community.

The men agreed at once to accept this welcome proposition, for the problem of finding such a place had seemed to them too difficult to solve.

Since Hedge-Hannes had been buried eight days ago, everybody had been relieved at the thought that one needn't expect either a fire or some other outrage for a while. Hedge-Hannes did not exactly perpetrate such things every day, but he carried such threats constantly in his mouth. Also he quarrelled with everybody and had not a single friend. No one had any idea how he made his livelihood, for he had no occupation except going on mysterious errands to other hamlets. When people asked him where he was going he said he had business to attend to, and whenever he would reappear at the door of his hut he looked more neglected and forlorn than ever. People were actually too afraid of his threats to cross his path or question him, as they would have liked to do. They only thought with pity of the pale, quiet wife he had lost when the little boy

had scarcely been five years old. She had never complained, though everybody knew there was enough for her to complain of. People often spoke of her and then someone would say, "If she had lived, things would have gone differently with the boy. But she proved too frail for that wild man." Neither could they help remembering in wonder the beautiful flowers the woman had always raised in her window-boxes. Apparently flowers had given her great pleasure.

No one understood how the boy could grow up and be so healthy without receiving the slightest care. No one went near him, in order not to cross his father's path. A short time ago Hedge-Hannes had come home from one of his business trips very ill and felt himself too miserable to get out of bed the next morning. The sick man sent his boy to the village to fetch a doctor, which meant a long walk, for there wasn't any physician in the village, either. When the doctor arrived the following day, he wanted to know how the sick man

had managed to break several ribs, besides receiving a curious wound. Hedge-Hannes was frightened, and thinking the doctor could not help him unless he knew how the accident had come about, he told him much he would otherwise have kept quiet. He described to the doctor how he had climbed the mountain heights opposite with a heavy burden on his back and on the point of putting down his load had taken a wrong step and fallen down the rocks.

"Yes, and I suppose a shot from a border-watchman followed," the doctor added dryly. "This would not have happened if you had taken your goods by the legal road. Then the fall would have been spared you, too. Your smuggling will cost you dearly and you'll repent your business now, I think."

And this proved true. A few days later Hedge-Hannes died in great pain from the consequences of his fall. The doctor had not concealed the matter and the dead man's boy was regarded since then with more suspicion

than ever. People could not help thinking of what he might have learned already on these nightly expeditions with his father.

The Sunday after the meeting the schoolmistress was unanimously elected and Michael, Hedge-Hannes's son, was shown to his night quarters and was told to get his meals in a different home each day.

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOOL-TEACHER

Beside an old parish house was a garden, where one could see the gleaming peaks of the nearby Alps. Here sat the daughter of the pastor, who after having preached fully forty years in the parish church had died and left the girl alone. This had happened a few weeks ago, and his daughter, Francesca, was still living in the house with an old serving-maid who had been with the family many years. She had been asked to receive and look after the parish vicar who had appeared at the beginning of the week. He had stayed two weeks and his term had passed. The new pastor who was elected was to move in the following day. Francesca sat at a table in the garden painting the gray stone fountain in the corner. It was overgrown with dark red roses, and the green twigs of the old willow hung down over the pretty spot. She had just finished another

drawing while sitting on the church wall. This latter picture beside her on the table showed three graves in the churchyard, which she had visited often and most carefully tended. She was now to leave them. She looked at the sheet of paper and then again at the sunny spot of lawn beside the wall where in early March the first snow-drops had peeped out every spring and gladdened her heart. On the free plot in front of the church she had often played with the village children on fine summer evenings, and on the wooden fence she had often rested to drink in the fresh odor of the grass and rejoice over the pink daisies and blue forget-me-nots which smiled at her from the lovely meadow. How happy the days had been when both her dear father and mother had been alive, especially the gay days when her young cousin whom everybody loved had come to visit them! Often her father had said to him, "You shall be my son and successor, and I'll stay in this parish till I can turn it over to your hands." The young cousin would

joyfully nod his head and answer, "Yes, we'll all live together in the parish house and stay together for many years." Then had come the years when Francesca had lived in town with her relatives in order to attend a good school. A zeal for learning had come over her and an eagerness to know everything there was to know, for her highest ambition in life at that time was to become a teacher. Even if she should have to wait before she could attain her wishes, she meant to prepare herself for this. For the present her parents wanted her at home and she returned. Her mother suddenly grew ill and Francesca nursed her faithfully till the day of sorrow when the mother closed her eyes forever. She had now been resting for many years under the white cross overgrown with beautiful green vines. Here the daughter had also planted white lilies and white roses. The young cousin slept under the ivy-covered stone. Once as a happy student he had returned with a wasting sickness to the happy parish house, where he hoped to recover. Fran-

cesca was twenty years old when she closed the eyes of the young man whom she had known so long and loved as a brother. Since then she had quietly lived on with her father and eight more years had passed. The father had not been ill long, but as soon as he was prostrate, he felt quite sure that his end was near. Whenever Francesca sat by his bedside he wished to keep her close to him. On the second day of his illness he said with a smile, "Now you won't have to wait much longer before your ambition to become a teacher will be realized, dear child. I am soon going." Francesca answered that her highest and sole wish was to remain always her father's true companion. Then she added, "Since so much sorrow has come to me, the desire to teach has died out in me completely. It must be a much more beautiful vocation to help the suffering." Her father then replied, "My dear child, it does not matter what work we choose as long as we have alive in our hearts some of the merciful love our own Saviour has shown

to us. In that case we can help, comfort and do good in every situation."

Francesca had come thus far in her musings when the old serving-maid interrupted her, bringing a letter. The girl looked surprised at the official envelope. Could this be an answer already to her application? Hardly two weeks had passed since she had read the following report in a newspaper:

"Hinterwald, a small mountain settlement, does not seem to succeed in obtaining a schoolteacher. This is not to be wondered at. No one could be tempted by the solitude of those parts and the utter lack of everything people need for living. This of course includes the teacher. The task of teaching a group of practically savage children is not very inviting, either." That post had tempted Francesca exceedingly, for the lonely mountain heights held no terrors for her. The feeling to be especially needed where nobody else wished to go gave her great satisfaction. Neither was she afraid of that crowd of wild children, for she

thought that anyone who loved children and was fond of their ways would have no trouble in winning their response, and this would mean success. The letter she had just received brought the formal announcement that she was chosen school-mistress for Hinterwald and could take her post any time she wished.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW POST

At the window in her little wooden school house stood Francesca, looking out at the green pasture before her. Groups of fir trees stood here and there on the rolling ground, and the narrow trail which wound by the school house led up to the pass, which on the other side descended to Wallis. Francesca, knowing this, found pleasure in looking at the little path, which must lead up to a glorious view. The light green grass on all sides did not look high and luxuriant as in the valley below. It was short and sparse, but at the same time vigorous pasture grass from which small gleaming mountain flowers peeped out in little patches. Francesca loved the view from her window. She had brought from her old home a pot of flourishing, fragrant mignonette which she had tended carefully for many years. This she placed at her open window, where it should

take its permanent place in the sunshine. The little house was already settled and everything there put in order, for Kathy, the devoted old maid from the parsonage, had come along. She had insisted upon this, for Francesca, although she was twenty-eight years old, seemed to her only a young girl and not fit to go into the wilderness alone. That is what Kathy felt and from the first she had not approved of her mistress's resolution. The watchman had received Francesca and acquainted her with her present duties. Till autumn she would not have very much to do, as most of the boys were either up on the Alp with the cattle or were needed for other tasks. The little ones and those among the girls who were not especially busy might come to school, but most were quite useful in the fields and woods and in taking care of the goats. The school was mostly needed in the winter, but as long as they had a teacher now, they might just as well profit from the fact for those who had no urgent work to do.

"That won't make their lessons very consecutive," Francesca had remarked.

"That does not matter," had been the watchman's calm reply. "It doesn't need to be consecutive. A little something is better than nothing."

It struck eight o'clock now, and at that hour Monday school was to begin. Francesca descended to the schoolroom, where she remained for a little while till she heard some hushed sounds before the windows. Looking out, she saw a considerable group of children assembled outside, and more still arriving from different sides. Apparently all felt shy towards the new teacher and no one wanted to come in first. The little knot moved like a solid mass towards the door now, pushing it open. But as all wanted to get in at once and no one to go in first, nobody got into the room at all, despite their efforts.

"Is this the way you usually come to school?" Francesca asked them.

She received no answer, but the first five

who were trying to force their entrance shook their heads.

"Then you needn't do it today, either. Come in one after another and shake hands with me," Francesca continued, "for we must get acquainted first of all. Each tell me his or her name, please."

The children looked at each other as if wondering what should be done next.

Francesca stretched out her hand and said pleasantly. "Come ahead now, who'll shake my hand first?"

A girl left the close ranks at this and came up to the teacher, and immediately the whole mass followed. "Lisi," said the girl, placing her hand in Francesca's, while she looked up at the new teacher. Her merry brown eyes peeped out through the most frightfully tangled hair.

"Good morning! Lisi," said Francesca. "Now tell me your other name, too, and then sit down on your bench."

"Metzler," was the answer, after which Lisi shot towards her bench. Hand after hand followed, and such a stream of names that they

were hard to understand. However, Francesca found it better not to hinder the rapid flow now, in secret quite sorry she had begun to shake the children's hands. After pressing the last little hand hers were so grimy she had to leave the room and wash them thoroughly before going further with her task.

Meanwhile her flock had warmed up a little and upon her return a terrific noise greeted her. Three boys had flung themselves into a hot fight, and the girls announced their sympathy for either party with loud, shrill cries. Francesca stepped up to the three fighting boys and after silently separating them, led the two smaller ones into one corner, the large one to the other. "Here you stand now, and I hope you feel thoroughly ashamed. You are too big entirely to come to school for fighting," she said to the eldest of them with great determination.

At first he looked at her with slight embarrassment; then he impudently remarked, "Yes, but Chel can hit much harder."

"Is he here, too?" asked Francesca.

"No, no, he doesn't come. He doesn't even come in winter when he ought to," replied Lisi.

She seemed a sort of leader in her class, to which the large culprit also belonged.

"Before everything else I want to hear all your family names again. I didn't quite understand them before, and I have to learn your names now," said Francesca. "Tell me your whole names now, one after the other."

It began: "Lisi Metzler, Gretli Metzler, Stindi Metzler, Annie, Trudi, Trini, Kathy, Madi Metzler."

"You can't possibly all be called Metzler," Francesca here interrupted. "Why do you all call out the same name, children?"

"But we do, we all have the same name, and there are three more girls, too, and about nine boys," Lisi remarked. "The rest of us here are called, Hupf, Knodli and Haderli and Tilli."

This explanation proved correct. To Francesca's inquiry how all the Metzlers could be told apart Lisi quickly replied that "this was quite easy. One was the Ober-Metzler, another

the Unter-Metzler, one the Metzler in front of the stream, the other behind the stream; one Metzler in the woods and one near the woods, then the family of Metzlers in Birdsong and the Metzlers near the heights where the thunder rolled so loudly," Lisi ended her recital.

While Lisi was eagerly giving this explanation Francesca examined her pupil's head in great surprise. The black hair looked curly and matted in some places, while in some it was in tight knots. In others it stood up straight like little flames.

"Tell me when you combed your hair last, Lisi?" Francesca asked as soon as the girl had finished.

"We don't comb our hair at all," the child retorted. "Mother just cuts it off with the scissors when it gets too thick. It soon grows again."

"You mean you never use a comb?" exclaimed Francesca, shocked. "Now I understand why your hair is in such a tangle. Why don't you comb your own hair, if your mother hasn't time? You could do it quite well, for

you are old enough. Is that the way you do, too?" she asked the rest, gazing at the heads, which varied in their disorder according to the quality and quantity of the hair. Some looked stiff and horrible, but all were completely uncared for.

A unanimous "Yes" was the reply.

"But from now on you must come to school nicely combed," said Francesca firmly, "and no one is to come uncombed tomorrow. Do you hear me, girls? Your hair is so short, boys, that I needn't speak of it to you, but I see something else. What is your name—over there on the bench? Good—Metzler On-the-Heights. You have no elbows in your shirt-sleeves, only two big holes where your elbows come through. They must be mended."

"And he has three more on his back," reported Lisi, who sat behind him.

"Tell your mother to mend it for you a little," commanded Francesca. "And you beside him do the same, and you too, and you there too. You had better all have it done. You all need it badly."

Francesca decided to postpone the lessons till that afternoon, for it had grown quite late now. She spent the rest of the morning learning her pupils' names and in getting acquainted with the children by questions asked them according to their character. Then she let them go.

Not a child appeared in the afternoon. Francesca thought that quite often in the summer they might have no school in the afternoon, so she employed it in preparing everything for the morrow and seeing to it that all her classes would have some occupation as soon as they arrived.

Francesca again entered the schoolroom the following morning, but not a sound could be heard; no humming of children's voices this time. She looked out of the window and no one could be seen. It got to be ten, eleven, even twelve o'clock and not a pupil became visible. That afternoon it was the same. Francesca said to herself that this might be some special day and that next morning they would all arrive.

But the following day nobody came either, and during the third and fourth days no child showed itself in the vicinity of the school house. Something had to be done. Francesca waited till evening, then wandered up to the mountain cliffs where the watchman had his dwelling. His name was Metzler too, but he was always called just Watchman. His little wooden house differed from many others in that his window panes were whole and that on the adjoining goat-stable no boards were missing. Also it had a good, solid door which kept the goats nice and warm in winter. Before Francesca reached the house, Lisi came suddenly flying out from round the corner of a house on the road. The child stood still as if rooted to the spot from astonishment.

"Come nearer, Lisi, we haven't seen each other for a long while," said Francesca pleasantly. "Do you live here? Do you know if the Watchman over there is at home?"

"No, he is chopping wood," reported Lisi, not venturing an inch nearer.

"Come here and give me your hand. Why do you act so strangely?"

Francesca had been firm and Lisi actually came up. She gave her right hand and with the left pressed her hair together as if then it could not be seen. Francesca understood the gesture. The wild state of her head had grown considerably worse since Francesca had scolded her for it.

"Tell me first of all why you haven't come to school?" inquired Francesca.

"We are not allowed to come unless our hair is combed," Lisi replied, still trying to cover up her head, which showed she had a distinct feeling that it ought to look very different.

"Yes, but if you know you shouldn't look that way, why don't you tell your mother and ask her to comb it for you?" Francesca questioned once more.

Lisi grew suddenly animated. Letting her hand drop quite suddenly she said quickly. "I did it at once as soon as I came home from school, but mother said that our comb was broken ages ago and that no one had money

to buy such stuff. One could always cut the hair if it got bad. Here she comes."

The child was pointing to a woman who was coming along with an axe on her shoulder and a basket of wood on her arm. On each side of her a small boy hung to her skirt and both let themselves be dragged forward in that fashion. A little girl not much bigger than the boys followed the group and she also clutched her mother from time to time in order not to be left behind.

"I must fix our supper, that's why I ran ahead," said Lisi, dashing into the cottage.

The woman wanted to pass Francesca without a word, but the latter stepped into her path and said, "Mrs. Metzler, I am the schoolteacher and I have come to find out why the children don't come to school. Your Lisi has come only once."

The woman had taken down the axe and leaned on it. "Don't pull me down," she said, trying to stop the three little ones from upsetting her. In order to hide their tangled heads they pulled their mother's narrow skirt

violently to and fro in the effort to make folds. "I surely can tell the school-teacher why," continued the woman in a voice which sounded both tired and indifferent. "If people like ourselves have more things to do than we can get done even if we work from early morning till late at night, it is natural we don't just run down to the village at once, which takes an hour there and an hour back. And all only just to get a comb! Besides, people like us have to think first if we shouldn't use the money for something better. A woman like you don't understand that. You have no experience. The Unter-Metzler's wife doesn't send her boys back either. She says that however she draws together the holes in their shirts they only grow bigger. That's the only way she knows how to do it, and I suppose she'll have to keep her boys home even in winter, for their coats all have holes too. Our old school-master understood these things and said nothing. No power on earth could ever bring our Lisi back to school after what you

said to her. But I must go now and I wish the school-mistress good evening."

"I like Lisi for it. I am glad what I said made such an impression on her. She can come tomorrow uncombed," Francesca called after the departing woman, who, however, did not turn about or give a sign that she had heard the message. But Lisi must have heard it, for she stuck her head through the broken pane, still pressing her hair together with her hand. Francesca nodded to her encouragingly, and Lisi also gave a slight nod.

Now Francesca went towards the house of the Watchman. He stood in the doorway, apparently waiting for the supper which his wife was preparing in the kitchen for him. The door was open and four or five children stood around, hindering her movements on all sides. All came running towards the door now to look out from behind their father to see who was coming.

"I came to ask you why it is," Francesca accosted the Watchman, "that so many children came to school the first day and never

have come back. I can see well enough, too, that they need to learn many things. Who has any authority here? It can't go on like this."

The Watchman, after pushing his cap to and fro, answered, "I knew at once it would come that way, yes, I knew it from the beginning. Things with us here can't go in time and order as a school-mistress like you might think. It needs more force, you see, to control them, and I suppose I was right when I said this is no place for a woman. I always knew it wouldn't work."

Francesca gazed wonderingly at him. "If this is what you think," she answered calmly, "I'll keep my counsel and shall go back to where I came from."

"I don't suppose you need be in such a hurry," said the Watchman.

At that moment a little boy, in order to see what was going on outside, tried to rush out from the kitchen, but the mother held him back violently. "Will you stay here?" she cried so loudly that those outside could hear

her. "Don't you know how she'd look at you if she saw you?"

But Francesca had already seen the boy, and it had not escaped her that one of his knees showed through a large hole in his trousers. She turned about silently and went her way. She had barely returned to her little house, when she heard a violent uproar outside. Stepping to her open window, she saw a crowd of yelling boys stop right before the school house, where a hot fight ensued. Five were all against one boy, who looked ragged and wild beyond words. His eyes flashing, he threw one boy down, then turning to another, showing his teeth, flung him down, too, and after that he crushed another to the earth.

"Just wait," one of the five called out now, "just wait! Look, the bad school-teacher is standing in her room watching you. Wait till you get to school and she'll put you safely into the hole."

Chel glanced up, seized a large stone and threw it savagely against the window. The flowerpot fell from the window with a crash,

and the beautiful mignonette lay broken on the ground below. Only a little bloom here and there showed green among the fragments. Before running away the boy for a moment raised his angry eyes to the window. All the others had dispersed as soon as they had heard the crash. Francesca came down to pick up the fragments. Nothing more could be done with the flowers. They were ruined, and the plant had to be thrown away.

Next day Francesca once more remained solitary in her schoolroom, and a great, solemn peace reigned around the house. Towards evening she made ready to go on an errand when she met Lisi, who stood at her door. As soon as the child saw the teacher, she quickly raised her hand to her head and pressed her hair together.

"Oh, is it you, Lisi?" Francesca said in a friendly tone. "Why don't you come in?"

"Because I am not combed," was Lisi's answer.

"Yes, but come in just the same. I asked

you to, remember. Now we shall try something."

Francesca led the child into her room and, taking from the wardrobe a strong new comb, she showed it to Lisi. "Look, I'll give you that comb if you promise me to comb your hair properly every morning before you come to school. Come, I'll show you how to do it."

Francesca began her work on Lisi's head, but the hair was so completely matted and the curls so tangled together that she could not accomplish anything at first. Finally she had to have recourse to the scissors, and when the hair was short, the task was easier. It could be combed now, neatly parted in the middle and the hair drawn to each side.

"You look quite different already, Lisi, so tidy and nice," said Francesca, satisfied. "You'll keep your hair in order from now on and later we'll make two plaits and fasten them around your head. Then you won't look any more as if birds had been nesting in your curls."

Lisi gazed with happy eyes at the fine comb

and could not comprehend that it was actually her own.

"Yes, I will," Lisi promised with joyful eyes before running away.

Early next morning, before Francesca had even breakfasted, she heard many children's voices in an eager altercation below, and saw outside the whole group of girls who had come to her the first day. But no boys had come. What had brought them to school a whole hour too soon, she wondered? Francesca got ready and then went to open the schoolroom. They came in now, Lisi first and the others one by one slowly following, quite different from their first entrance. "Why have you come so early today? It isn't time yet to begin. Do you really want to come to school now?"

The children one and all stood up before their teacher. They gave her no answer, neither did they settle in their seats, and most of them nervously pulled their fingers.

Lisi stepped forward. "They'd like to have a comb, too, and wear their hair like mine," she ventured.

Lisi's hair was smooth and nice, just as Francesca had shown her how to fix it the day before. "I am glad," she said with a smile, "that you like it better when it is neat. Your hair is in terrible disorder, but you don't have to have a comb just like mine. If you know how to use it, any one will do. But any girl who hasn't one can put her hand up."

Immediately all the hands flew up.

"Oh, I see," Francesca said, surprised. "If that is really so, I must see to it that things are different." After looking at all the tangled heads and meeting their longing eyes, she decided not to frustrate their wishes. "Come with me and I'll completely transform you now. We'll do the other things later."

As she went to the pump, the children followed at her heels, and such a thorough washing of hands, arms and heads took place as none of her pupils had ever before experienced. "Stand in the sun and dry your hair now." Going to her room, she returned with scissors and a comb. It proved long and difficult work,

but Francesca saw herself fully rewarded, for the children looked at each other laughing and smiling with astonishment and pleased with the great change the comb and scissors had wrought. When at last all stood in the sun they fairly shone, they were so clean and tidy. Francesca was thrilled to see before her entirely different children. They looked so much more pleasant that Francesca thought their mothers would probably not recognize them when they came home.

"Now you look nice. Stand up in front of me and I'll tell you something else." Waiting till all stood up she announced: "You can go home, for it has grown to be noon while we were working. You must come to school now every morning unless your parents need you for some definite work. But as the boys are not coming till winter, we'll leave the books till we can all study together, and we'll do something quite different now. Girls, all of you who can knit, put up your hands."

Not a hand was raised.

"Is that so? Who can sew, then?"

Again not a hand went up.

"Now listen and remember what I say. Tomorrow each of you just bring either a stocking, a coat or a shirt that has a hole and I'll teach you how to mend. We'll work right away on the torn things, for that will help the most. Whoever is good and industrious and does what I say shall have a comb for reward, girls. You can go now."

The children left in a much more mannerly way than was usual. They had the feeling that in their new state it wouldn't do to push roughly and throw things at each other. Francesca could see how they would often stop on the way and gaze at each other in admiration.

"If only I could straighten out their rags as quickly as I did their hair," she said to herself.

CHAPTER IV

THE ACCUSED

FRANCESCA stood in the midst of many children, all of whom were trying hard to get close to her. Each had a torn piece of clothing in her hand and every girl tried to lift hers higher than her neighbor's in order to attract the school-mistress's attention. "Just come nicely in order, one after another," she commanded. "I can't help you all at once, and if you press me so close between you I can't help anybody at all."

This injunction helped a little, but not much, for the children were fired with a great zeal for work. For the past eight days the school-mistress had been teaching them to mend and knit, and not one of the girls had forgotten that the desired comb was to be the prize for her industry. Quite a number of them had already received the reward. The new course also seemed to find great approval among the

mothers, and more girls were sent to school each day. Francesca could not understand how there could be so many girls among the few scattered houses of the hamlet. Every girl, from the first to the last, must be in school now. She had ordered so many combs that the shopkeeper in the village thought the new school-mistress was keeping a little store, too. He had steadily supplied her with so much thread, so many needles, tapes and ribbons, too, of every kind that he could only understand it in that fashion. Today two new girls had appeared in school, Nani and Betty, the Watchman's little daughters. Till now the mother had always said to them, "You needn't go to school, for the teacher thinks you ought always to be dressed up like ladies. That's so suitable for hard-working people, isn't it?" And the father had added, "There is no use starting in with her at all, for the whole thing won't last long. I always said a school-mistress wouldn't do."

But a short time before, the Watchman's wife had heard Lisi tell her children what

they were learning now in school, and Lisi had proudly shown her little skirt, which was neatly mended. After this the Watchman's wife had ordered her children to go to school, too.

Francesca was very busy, here fitting a piece of material to a large tear in a jacket, and there returning a mended stocking to a little girl, when she was suddenly interrupted by a frightful noise outside. Hurrying to the window, she saw a crowd of angry boys shouting and running towards the school house. In the middle of the knot two men were dragging along a boy, without getting very far. The boy resisted with all his might, for he was truly desperate. But soon the boy was conquered and uttered a loud cry. Francesca rushed out and into the very midst of the agitated group. Planting herself before the men who were holding fast the prisoner, she at once recognized Chel, who had thrown the stone at her flowerpot. The men stood still, for Francesca had stopped their progress with great determination.

"What has he done? Where are you taking

him?" she asked in such agitation that the men looked at her in surprise.

"What did he do?" one of the men replied, "one of his usual outrages. The Watchman this time pronounced the punishment, because it concerns his own property."

"He is to be put into the pit in the rocks," said the other. "That is the only thing to tame him for a few weeks. March ahead now!"

"No, no, not to that hole, don't take me there!" cried the boy so desperately that it penetrated to Francesca's soul and she held back the men with both her arms. One of them, who was the Unter-Metzler, stood still at once, for his children went to the school and his wife had a great respect for the new teacher. In fact, she could not say enough in her praise.

"What is this stone pit?" she asked the Unter-Metzler, who, with a gesture, had persuaded his companion to stand still, too.

She heard now that the stone hole was a deep pit with a small opening towards the top which could be practically covered by a

slab. Both men said that the boy only gave up his wickedness for a while if they took him there, for nothing else ever helped, neither blows nor hunger.

"But that is too frightful!" Francesca exclaimed. "If you give him no light and air, it is as bad as burying him alive!"

"He isn't left long enough to suffocate," said the men indifferently.

"I should hope not!" was Francesca's curt retort. "But what misdeed did he do to get such a punishment?"

"Through his fault the Watchman's Bluefinch has grown lame," reported the Unter-Metzler. "He threw stones at her so that she broke her leg. Now she can't walk any more and lies there groaning, and the veterinary can't come, either, he lives so far down the valley."

"Poor little Bluefinch!" said Chel compassionately, for the moment forgetting his own bad situation completely.

"I suppose Bluefinch is a bird?" said

Francesca. "How could Chel throw stones at a bird?"

"No, no, Bluefinch is the most beautiful goat in these parts," explained the Unter-Metzler, "and she belongs to the Watchman. Now the boy has ruined her and she may even die. Yes, he did."

"No, I didn't, I didn't hurt her," cried Chel as if he were being bitterly hurt himself.

"Lies come easy to that one and the truth not so easily," said the Unter-Metzler. "But it's true. The goat disappeared from the pasture and came back to the stable late at night limping and half dead. She had a piece of a neckcloth round her broken leg, which the boys knew to be Chel's. He tied it round her, of course, so that the fracture wouldn't be seen."

"No, not on account of that," Chel broke out here, "but so she could get home and it wouldn't hurt her so much."

"There, can't you see that he knows about it?" said the man.

"So you knew she had broken a leg?" asked Francesca, who could not believe, as before,

in Chel's innocence. "How could she have broken it if not by a throw?"

"She fell down the rocks," said Chel dejectedly.

"The goat-boy would have seen that, too," replied the Unter-Metzler. "And how could she have gotten up again with her broken leg? How could you have bandaged her leg if she lay on the rocks below?"

"I climbed down and helped her up," Chel said shakily.

"That shows how he fibs," said the other man. "You were not up with the goats at all, for otherwise the goat-boy would have seen you. Let's go ahead, for he'll keep right on lying if we give him the chance!"

"Yes, yes, it's high time," joined in the Unter-Metzler. "March!"

Chel again resisted in sheer desperation. "I didn't do it!" he cried out again, looking at Francesca.

"He also threw down and smashed the teacher's flowerpot with a large stone," one of the boys accused him.

Renewed fright made Chel's eyes gleam and he turned his face aside as if to say, "Now everything is lost!"

"That has nothing to do with the matter here," Francesca said quickly. "Leave the boy to me. We can put him into the correction-hole in the house here, for he must not be thrown into the pit. No one knows if he is really guilty. It is a bad enough punishment to be locked up here, I think. Tell the Watchman I want to talk to him, please, and leave the boy to me. I'll be responsible for him."

"He'll beat in the door and walls and escape us," said the Unter-Metzler, "but if you will be responsible, all right."

With this he let go of the boy, and the other man, whose hands had held the boy's limbs like iron clamps, did the same. Chel violently shook himself, then Francesca grasped his hand and led him into the house. She shut the door to keep out the curious onlookers, who all wanted to see if Chel would misbehave himself further. Francesca went into her

room, pointed to a chair for Chel and sat down herself. For the first time she saw the boy closely. He had no shoes or stockings, and the few pieces of clothing he wore were in tatters. The thick brown hair fell down to his neck and deep into his eyes, and every few minutes he shook back this disorderly, curly mane. Hunger and want, however, were not apparent in the lad's face. His dark eyes gazed up at Francesca, sometimes shyly, then in anger, only to drop again to the ground as if to evade her glance.

"Chel," she now said in a friendly voice, "let us talk together. I must know, first of all, if you told the truth, or if you lied from fear of the pit. You realize that I mean well with you, don't you, Chel?"

Chel threw her a shy glance and said, "Yes, but I don't know why."

"Because I am sorry for you. I know that you are all alone and have no father and mother who can love you and protect you from evil. Tell me, Chel, please answer me truly as if I were your mother. Did you tell the truth?"

With bigger and still more astonished eyes Chel gazed at the speaker. Words reached his ears which he could hardly comprehend. But he remained dumb, as if questioning Francesca himself.

"Won't you tell me, Chel? Tell me honestly and don't be afraid!" she encouraged the lad.

He drew a deep breath at last as if he were awakening from a dream and said briskly. "Yes, I told the truth. I didn't hurt little Bluefinch. I could never hurt her."

"But I don't understand how it happened that she fell. Everybody said that the goat-boy would have seen you if you had been on the pasture."

"No, I wasn't there. Bluefinch didn't fall down up there," replied the boy.

"I don't understand this. Wasn't the goat with the herd, Chel? Where did she fall?"

The boy made no reply.

"Did you see her fall?" asked Francesca.

"No, but when she was down she bleated and I heard her," was the answer.

"But where were you?"

Chel did not answer.

"Listen, Chel. I only question you this way for your own good. I want to keep you from that vile punishment. Tell me where you were and what you did," pleaded Francesca.

The boy shook his head, but his expression was no longer stubborn. He seemed to be quite sorry for not complying with Francesca's request.

"Do please tell me all about it, Chel," Francesca supplicated.

But the boy shook his head again.

"Did you do something wicked, after all? Instead of throwing a stone at the goat, did you push her down over some rocks?" asked Francesca, agitated at this new suspicion. "Did the Watchman punish you once, and did you try to revenge yourself?"

Chel gazed up at Francesca with an open glance and absolutely honest eyes when he replied, "I'd never, never do Bluefinch any harm! I only pulled her up and bandaged her foot because it hurt her so, and she could hardly walk. She had such pain that she ran home on her three legs, the poor little goat."

Francesca was convinced by now that Chel had done no harm to Bluefinch. But why wouldn't he tell where he had been when he saw the accident? What had he to hide? She again examined this boy who had such a wretched reputation. His eyes were absolutely glued on a picture she had fastened on the wall. It was one she had brought from home where white lilies and roses grew on her beloved graves with the green ivy drooping its leaves over the gray stones. A deep compassion now filled her heart for the lonely boy, who might already be on wicked paths.

"Oh, Chel!" she exclaimed, "if I only knew how it stands with you! What shall I do with you? Why do you look at me so shyly? You can't possibly think I mean you harm? Are you afraid of me?"

"Yes," said Chel, looking at the floor.

"But why? How can it be so?" said Francesca, amazed.

"Because I threw the stone!"

"Oh, I see! Is that what troubles you?" cried the teacher, amazed. "It is quite right

you should feel ashamed, Chel. You really earned a punishment for that. It wasn't right to do it, was it? Are you sorry now you did it?"

Chel nodded without daring to raise his eyes.

"Then look up at me and give me your hand. You see I am not angry with you. If you are truly sorry, I'll forgive you absolutely and I'll never think of it any more. It shall be truly and entirely forgotten and wiped out."

Chel really glanced up now and a warm glow came into his eyes.

"Will you openly tell me everything now? How it was that day and what happened, where you were when she broke her leg? I want to clearly justify you before the others, don't you see?"

Chel had dropped his eyes again and shook his head.

Francesca rose. "Nothing can be done, then," she said to herself, discouraged. She set the table for supper and called to the maid to bring in the simple meal. Old Kathy threw many a suspicious glance at the boy beside her

mistress, for she had been well informed as to all Chel's misdeeds, including the bad reputation of his father, who had also been feared and avoided by everybody. Chel sat down at the table when Francesca invited him to, and she observed that he did not eat like a person who was starved.

When the table had been cleared, Francesca said, "You are my prisoner by rights, Chel, and I was only able to keep you in the house here because I said I would put you into the correction-hole below. But as I am convinced you did not deserve the punishment and have not hurt the goat, I won't lock you up there. I'll go to see the Watchman tomorrow morning. I have no bed to give you, but you can lie down on this bench. Here is a pillow for your head."

"I don't need that," said Chel, looking about him as if he were quite pleased to be a prisoner here.

"You must not run away during the night or jump out through the window," said Francesca, who was assailed by a new fear that Chel might hanker after his freedom as soon as

he was left alone. But he gazed honestly up into her eyes and said, "No, I won't do it."

"Now, we'll say an evening prayer together," she continued, opening a book which lay beside her on the table. "Then we'll go to sleep. What do you pray in the morning and evening, Chel?"

"Nothing," he answered.

"What, you never pray? Don't you know what it means to pray, Chel?"

"Oh, yes! the way one prays in church," replied the boy.

"Then you go to church? Do you really walk all the way down to the village to go to church?" Francesca's face showed deep surprise.

"I don't go in, but I listen at the door and I can't help wondering always."

"What makes you wonder, Chel?"

"Why mother went there?" he replied. "Father told me once that mother forever ran to church."

"Your mother knew well enough why she went there. She needed to get some comfort

and the certainty that God meant well with her, and she must often have doubted that. You know, too, that God means well with you, Chel, don't you? And you realize that you can call on Him for help and mercy when you need it?"

"No, I don't, and it isn't so," retorted Chel with firm conviction.

"How can you talk like that, Chel? Why do you say it as if you were so certain?"

"Because nobody means well with me. No one ever did except you today."

"But our God Himself has put it into my heart to mean well with you. I felt so badly when I heard you were in wicked ways, and I want to do everything I can to bring you to an honest way of living. That would make you feel so different, Chel, and you would never have to be frightened any more the way you were today at that horrible punishment. I should then feel happy and relieved for your sake."

"Did the good God really do that?" asked Chel, surprised.

"Yes, Chel, I am quite certain of it. Now listen well and think over the words I'll read to you till you fall asleep."

With eager attention and ever widening eyes Chel listened to the evening song Francesca read, which concluded with the following verses:

"Leave me not to lonely grief,
Lost in mortal blindness!
Grant, O God, the sweet relief
Of Thy loving-kindness!

"Give me but one ray of hope
To dispel my sorrow!
Turn the night wherein I grope
To a joyous morrow!"

CHAPTER V

NO LIGHT YET

When Francesca came into the room early the next morning Chel was so deeply lost in the contemplation of her little painting on the wall that he did not even notice her entrance. When she went to his side, he started and quickly turned around as if he had done a wrong.

"You can look at the picture if you want to, Chel," said Francesca kindly. "Do you like it so much?"

"Yes, it has such beautiful white color, and I never saw those white flowers," Chel replied.

After they had breakfasted together, Francesca laid a book before the lad and said, "I am going out now. Stay here quietly till I come back. You can read this meanwhile."

"I don't know how," said Chel, sitting down at once, however.

Francesca went out. She started early in

the day because she wished to find the Watchman at home before he went off to work, and she herself had to be back by school-time. Her pupil, Nani, was standing at the wooden pump outside, washing—a new thing that the teacher had effected. Francesca kindly nodded to the child, inquiring for her father.

"Over there in the goat-stable," the girl said, pointing to it with her out-stretched hand.

When Francesca entered, she saw the Watchman squatting on the floor, talking half in anger and half in sorrow to the goat which lay before him on the straw. Francesca inquired about the goat and if the veterinary had come yet.

"Yes, he has come and my expenses are not small, either. Just look at her," he said, moving to one side on his knees in order that Francesca could see the goat, too. "Here she lies unable to get up. He fixed her leg all right, but he says she must lie still, and of course while she lies here, she gives no milk. Neither does she eat and apparently she doesn't

want what we give her. She is the cleverest goat anywhere around."

With a groan he stroked the beautiful long hair of the creature, which lay quite still and proud, as if to say, "I have a good reason for not showing any appetite."

"She certainly is clever," the Watchman began again, "and always knew where to find the most vigorous and spicy herbs. Oh, but her milk was good—not so much, the others give more—but such milk, yes, such milk, like pure honey. And now, and now! Oh, the—the—"

"I suppose you are thinking of Chel," Francesca took up the word. "I come to you on behalf of him. You see, Watchman, I am absolutely convinced the lad has done your goat no harm. He is very fond of her and feels sorry she is suffering. I am quite sure it wasn't the boy's fault the creature had her fall."

Now the Watchman's wrath broke loose. His sorrowful tone was gone and all the accusations he had ever heard against Chel came pouring from his angry lips. The whole valley

knew the boy's behavior, the harm he did the cattle and the houses by throwing stones and how he pulled up and destroyed anything they planted, and always gave blows and kicks wherever he was able. To as far down as the valley there wasn't a single house where people didn't hate and fear the boy. When Francesca wished to know where Chel really lived, where he worked and spent his time, the Watchman repeated three times in his violent indignation. "Work, yes, work, he work? He does nothing, absolutely nothing, and not a soul knows where he strolls about. He probably learned his father's sly ways. He was told to eat with one of us every day, and he did it three or four times, and then no more. Nobody knows where he gets his food, but he must get it in some dishonest fashion, otherwise he would have been starved long ago. A nice bed was prepared for him over the goat-stable of the Unter-Metzler, and once in a long while he comes and ten times he stays away. No living person has ever discovered where he disappears to, but it is certain he'll soon come to

a worse and more violent end than his father. The boy is ten times worse than the old one ever was."

His terrible wrath had made the Watchman more eloquent than he had ever been, and Francesca heard these accusations with a heavy heart. Was Chel really as wicked as his reputation and could she be completely mistaken in him? He had actually made a pleasant impression on her. Could he dissemble so well? He had hardly talked, but his nature had seemed so different from what the Watchman and everyone else was saying. At least she was quite certain that he had done the goat no harm. This she had stressed without feeling the slightest doubt. The Watchman's wife now came running out. Nani had just told her of the school-teacher's presence in their stable. Since yesterday a great change had taken place in the woman's opinion of the new teacher, for Nani had taken to school little Hans's torn trousers, through which his knee had peeped out completely. The task had proved so hard for the little beginner that the

school-mistress herself had mended the tear. It was so beautifully done that the Watchman's wife kept on gazing at the transformation as if it were a miracle. Also the teacher had told Nani she had a clever hand and would in a short time learn to mend all the holes, if only she came to school diligently. This would enable them to wear all the clothes much longer, for the stuff grew no tighter where it was mended and therefore would not pull out into larger holes as it used to do. The prospect of such a saving of work on her part thrown in with such an improvement in her children's appearance without any expense had given the mother much joy. Since yesterday she had at least ten times told her husband what a wonderful piece of luck for the community it was to have gotten such a teacher. The woman quite suddenly opened the door of the goat-stable and cried, "What do you mean by keeping the school-mistress out here in the stable all the time, so she is obliged to stand? You men really have no idea of anything! Please come into the house and let us welcome you

there. Nani is quite beside herself with joy that you have come to us." Francesca thanked her for the invitation. She would come in another time as her time this morning only sufficed to say a last word to the Watchman.

"Chel may be as bad as you say," she said, turning to the man; but it is quite certain he is innocent this time. Therefore, he cannot be punished. I hope you will agree with me then that the boy should receive his freedom? There is no reason for keeping him locked up any longer."

But the Watchman would not hear of this and only now remembered that the boy was actually not thrown into the hole at all. He swore the boy must get what he had earned, he must be put into the pit, if he himself had to force him in there.

"Don't swear such things," his wife interposed! "If the school-mistress says he didn't do it this time, she is sure to know. You can't oppose her. The matter can't be altered now and you have no profit from throwing him into the pit. As soon as he gets out he might

only throw a stone at the white goat from sheer anger."

"Please leave him to me, Watchman. I'll do what I can, and it is possible something can be accomplished with kindness. He has apparently received quite enough punishment already."

"Nobody can make him straight," cried the Watchman in agitation. "But if he has to get worse from year to year, I suppose it can't be helped. I always said from the beginning it wouldn't work with a—"

"The goat is bleating, and the teacher probably knows best what is to be done with Chel," the woman cut short her husband's speech. She knew quite well he meant the schoolmistress in his words, but her opinion had completely altered.

Francesca took her leave after begging the wife to persuade her husband that Chel had not done this wrong, since she herself was quite certain of it. When Francesca left she could not feel quite happy despite her convic-

tion, and all the accusations she had heard against Chel lay heavily on her heart. He was really working nowhere. She herself had noticed that his well-formed hands did not show any traces of field work like those of all the other boys. If he did not go to different houses to eat, where then did he get his food? He even spent his nights outside, and no one knew where. And why did he not wish to answer her inquiries? What did the boy have to hide? When Francesca entered her room she found the boy bent over the book she had given him. As quick as lightning he put something into his pocket at her entrance. She had a dreadful thought, but next moment felt angry with herself for having had it. No, it was out of the question that he would take anything from her; he looked so pleased to see her again.

"Chel, you are free and can go wherever you wish," she said. "I told the Watchman that you were innocent about Bluefinch."

"Did they make Bluefinch's leg whole again, so she won't be lame?" asked Chel timidly.

"Yes, the veterinary came," Francesca replied, a trifle astonished that the fate of the goat seemed to concern the boy more than his own.

"You must come to see me sometimes in the evenings when you are able, and then we'll talk over many things. Won't you come to school, too? But I suppose not till the other boys are able, towards winter-time."

A ray of joy shot from Chel's eyes at this invitation.

"And one thing more," continued Francesca. "Look for some work, whatever it is. There are some big farms in the valley where you are sure to find something to do. You see, if people have no work they easily get into trouble and then they can't feel happy. You must also go and eat properly with the people who expect you. Don't spend your nights away, either, Chel, for you must get to bed regularly, as every orderly boy should do. Otherwise no one knows where you are. I only tell you this because I am so anxious for

your welfare. Then everything will go well with you and people won't always blame you whenever something has gone wrong."

Every vestige of joy had disappeared from Chel's face as he stretched out his hand to say farewell. He looked up for a moment with an expression of genuine sorrow. Then he left the school house.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISCOVERY

The admiration people felt for the new school-mistress in Hinterwald kept continuously growing. The work the pupils brought home from school and the swiftness with which everything was repaired and came back whole were great sources of wonderment for the mothers and grandmothers of the hamlet. Even the youngest children were now able to accomplish things that the oldest women had never seen or dreamed of, and the most ragged clothes were made quite presentable. The grown-up girls began to envy their younger sisters their cleverness and many wished they could go to school again. First the men thought that their wives made too much of a "to-do" over the new teacher and all expected the enthusiasm to cool down when the charm of newness was past. But soon they noticed with great satisfaction that shirts through which they used to stick

out their arms had no more holes in the sleeves, and their vests had grown much more comfortable on account of the firm rows of buttons on them, instead of one or perhaps two which dangled by a thread. They promptly agreed with the wives that they never could have dreamed of such a teacher.

But because she was so clever and experienced in things they had never even imagined, the women grew to have confidence in her respecting other points also. The wife of the Unter-Metzler sent to inquire what should be done for her sprained foot, which she was not able to use at all. An old woman by the name of Hupf sent word by her grandchild that her eyes were growing so dim she could not even knit the coarsest stocking, because she was unable to pick up the stitches which she dropped. Couldn't the school-mistress tell her of some means that might help her. Francesca went to both women and promised to order a remedy for the foot. She said that a pair of glasses would help the old woman's eyes and agreed to send for these, too. The poor old

woman, who lived in the same house with her daughter-in-law and her seven children, had on this occasion opened her heart to Francesca about other matters, too, for she said nobody ever before had wished her good-evening in such a friendly voice. The old woman had lost her son and was obliged to be a burden to her daughter-in-law, who already had to provide for her seven children. She would have liked to die but, after all, only the good God in Heaven ruled over that. Francesca agreed with her and tried to give comfort to the old woman in her difficult position. Also she promised soon to return and assist her as well as she knew how. "Oh, you helped me so much with your good promise and kind words," the old woman called after her.

When Francesca returned that evening from her visit, she saw a large flowerpot before one of the windows in the schoolroom. She opened the window quickly, and a most lovely fragrance met her. The white Alpine violets blooming in great profusion gave her such delight that she breathed in their perfume over

and over again. No other flowers had a fragrance like those sweet violets. When she wondered who had brought her the flowers, she at once thought of Chel. But where could Chel have gotten the pretty pot, he was so poor? And then—but that couldn't be, for Chel had never once come to see her, glad not to be watched or controlled. As the children appeared in school one by one, each was asked if they knew anything about the flowers, but no one could tell anything about them. Possibly a grateful mother had brought them, thought Francesca, for many had told her how glad they would have been to do her some little favor. Francesca determined to inquire among those if they had brought the flowers.

Chel had never returned, and when Francesca asked the school children if anybody had had news of him, she found out that nobody had seen or even heard of him. He had not once appeared for his meals, and no one knew if he ever slept in his hayloft, for nobody had seen him. Where was Chel keeping himself?

Francesca felt real pain in her heart about the boy, and the glorious summer days with the lovely sunshine and the smiling flowers in the meadows did not rejoice her as they should have done. The more beautiful it was, the more she grieved for Chel, who might be on dark paths indeed. These sad thoughts filled Francesca's heart, as she was on the point of closing the window of her living room and the perfume of the Alpine violets thrilled her senses. She had brought the flowers up here in order to have them close to her. Lost in deep thought, she stood at the window and gazed out into the quiet, starlit night. Now she heard somebody running swiftly towards the house, and directly after a loud knocking came from below. Francesca went to the door and asked who was outside.

"I, I," said a child's voice.

Francesca opened. "Is it you, Lisi? What do you want from me so late?" she asked, surprised.

"Mother said she hoped you'd be so good

as to come to us quickly. Poor grandfather feels queer and frightened."

"But, Lisi," Francesca interposed, "if your grandfather is so ill, the doctor should be fetched. Of course it is too late for you to go so far to the valley, but your father should have done so."

"No, no, that wouldn't do any good," Lisi said with conviction. "He wouldn't come up as late as that, and mother said that grandfather wasn't sick. He is just old and all he wants is somebody to say some prayers aloud for him. He is awfully frightened."

"Did you send for your pastor and tell him your grandfather felt that way?" asked Francesca, fetching out her book.

"Oh, no, our pastor is so old. He couldn't come all the way up here. Everybody knows that is much too far for him," Lisi explained.

"Come, then, I'll go with you."

Francesca took the child by the hand and together they hastened up the heights. Lisi's mother was standing beside her old father, a cup of milk in one hand and a glass of cider

in the other, offering him both in turn for refreshment. But he refused them both.

"No more of that," he said.

When Francesca had stepped to his bed and, greeting him, had asked sympathetically if he still felt afraid, he answered, "Yes, I am, but I know a verse which says, 'After a hundred years God shows us mercy,' and I am ninety-six, which is nearer a hundred than ninety. So it will be meant for me, don't you think so?"

"Surely, Metzler," replied Francesca, "but not just alone for the sake of years. If you long for grace in your heart God will give it to you, I know."

"Yes, yes, that's what I mean, too. That will be the way," muttered the old man, breathing heavily. "Sit down by me a little and say a few good words to me, something with comfort in it, that will make it easier for me to die."

Francesca complied. In her home she had often helped her father by visiting the very sick when he was not able to go to everybody, and she knew what brought calm and comfort.

She said many consoling words of mercy and compassion and of a future life without suffering. Also she prayed aloud several verses which had brought rest to others before. After a while the old man lay down and seemed to fall asleep. He breathed ever more feebly, for it proved to be his last slumber. When everything was still, Francesca rose to return, the woman being full of regrets that her husband was not home to accompany Francesca. He had gone away to sell the young goats, and was not expected home till tomorrow. But Francesca went away, saying she was not frightened in the least, for the moon was shining and no one would be about at that late hour. When she stepped out from a group of firs to the open road, somebody approached her. With the moon shining in his face, she at once, to her joy and surprise, recognized Chel.

"Chel, Chel," she cried, "is it you? But where do you come from so late at night? Where are you going?"

Chel stood rooted to the spot. He had grown

quite white at this sudden encounter and said nothing.

"Now you must come home with me, Chel," said Francesca, taking the boy firmly by the hand and walking on. Chel followed most willingly. "You did not want to go to your regular sleeping place again," she continued, "for the Unter-Metzler lives way down there and you passed the stable long ago. You'll be as well with me as where you were going."

Entering the house and making a light, she led the boy at once to the open window through which streamed in the moonlight. "Do you know these flowers?" she asked, pointing to the violets. Chel blushed deep scarlet.

"Now I know you gave them to me, Chel, and they are the most lovely flowers I ever owned. They give me the greatest pleasure, and since I know you brought them, they please me more than ever. So you have thought of me, despite never coming near me. Why didn't you come, though? Where have you been all this time? I have looked for you every day, and many a fine day was spoiled for me be-

cause you didn't come and I didn't know what you were doing. Where have you been, Chel?"

Francesca sat down beside the boy, looking at him expectantly. An expression of joy on Chel's face was quickly followed by one of fear He turned his head and said in a low voice, "I can't tell you."

The school-mistress looked at him. It was not the face of a wicked, depraved lad, for he had raised his eyes honestly and warmly whenever he was grateful for her words. Now he again gazed down in such a melancholy way. He clearly regretted not being able to talk to her.

He must be afraid of punishment. After all he had been treated wretchedly all his life. "Chel," she said, grasping his hand, "don't you know how it is when one loves a person? Don't you remember your own mother?"

Chel nodded.

"You do? Then you can understand how she must have worried about you and hoped no evil would come near you and nobody would do you harm. You see I feel that way about

you, and you couldn't possibly be afraid to tell me anything. I am so anxious to help you, Chel. Please confide in me and tell me what you do with yourself and where you live."

"I wouldn't mind telling you, if only the others—" Chel stopped abruptly.

"If you tell me, Chel, I'll do all I can to keep the others from knowing it. I might be able to help you—if only you would give me your confidence."

"Then I'll show you where I go," said Chel, and rose.

"You'll show me!" Francesca exclaimed in fright. "But can I go there?"

"Yes, if I show you how one gets there, and it is bright moonlight now," Chel assured her.

"No, Chel, we won't roam around so late at night; it is out of the question. There is no order in your life at all, if you can't distinguish night from day." Francesca rose from her seat. "Rest on this bench as you did the first time you stayed with me. I'll go with you tomorrow, Chel. You must show me everything. Good-night, now."

The sun had not risen yet when Francesca entered her living room. Chel was already wide awake and eagerly looking at the pictures on the wall. "We'll start off at once," she said, looking at the boy thoughtfully. "Do you know what you promised me yesterday?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," he replied, making straight towards the door.

"Drink this milk first and eat this piece of bread, and I'll take some breakfast too before we start. Who knows where we are going? I can't say your clothes are very suitable for Sunday, Chel! I wish I could give you some," she added.

Chel, suddenly grown conscious of his appearance, turned away, not daring to touch his milk. He had neither shoes nor stockings on his brown and dusty feet; his clothes consisted only of a shirt and a pair of completely ragged trousers. "Come, Chel, drink your milk!" said Francesca soothingly. "I suppose you have something at home to wear for Sunday?"

"No, this is all I have," said the boy with averted face.

"Who mends your things, Chel?"

"Nobody."

"What do you do when your trousers wear out entirely?" Francesca inquired, turning the lad about, placing the cup of milk in his hands, and bidding him drink.

Chel gave no answer.

"Come, let us start off now, Chel. I prayed to God for both of us, begging Him to accompany us on our road. I can go with real confidence in my heart now."

It was close to sunrise, for rosy morning clouds sailed across the clear sky. The dark fir trees which the two approached stood out clearly against it, each tree showing its outline sharply. Chel had chosen the road to the pass, and they climbed silently up the heights. The sun had risen, and everything about them sparkled; the flowers on the roadside gleamed and even the swaying larch trees beyond the hills by the mountain walls seemed to celebrate the Lord's day. Chel alone, who with bare feet

skipped along beside his companion, the mountain breeze blowing through his tangled hair, looked far from festive. Where was he going? They had climbed for at least an hour and must be near the pass. A short time ago Chel had left the trodden path and turned toward the rocky wall to the left, a region overgrown with thick fir trees. They stood before a seemingly impenetrable thicket, where the broad branches of the ancient fir trees had thickly intertwined and spread along the ground. Chel wanted to keep going just the same.

"No, Chel, we can't get through here," said Francesca, standing still.

"Yes, we can," said Chel, climbing as lightly as a squirrel over the knotted branches and the tree trunks and stretching out his arm in order to assist Francesca. She still hesitated a moment, then, not willing to turn back now, she gave Chel her hand. She held to him while he helped her over the bushes and brambles, the rotten tree stumps and gnarled branches, through tangled underbrush and vines. He

helped her over all these trying obstacles and seemed sure of his way.

Stepping from the sombre forest, they came at last upon a clearing. Never had Francesca seen a more entrancing view. They stood in a sunny pasture and on all sides gleamed and sparkled the red rock-carnations, golden ranunculus, pink anemones, fragrant mountain violets and sky-blue gentians. The mighty Walliser Alps showed their snow-covered peaks against the deep blue sky, and between the sharp peaks and points shimmered the wide glaciers descending to the depths like streams frozen in mid-career. In sheer delight Francesca looked first at the laughing, shining flowers, then at the snow-peaks and the towering trees on the walls of rock at both sides. The whole scene was bathed in the glorious morning light. She ran over the flowery pasture to the edge. Yes, she had thought so. From here she could look right down to the Walliser Valley. But how sheer the rocks fell here, straight, straight down to the deep abyss! As she went still nearer the edge in order to

gaze down, she felt herself clutched by the dress. Turning about she found Chel holding her.

"Bluefinch fell down here, and I could hardly fetch her up," he said, not letting go the dress of his companion.

In her delight over everything she saw, Francesca had completely forgotten why she had come here. Only now Chel's words reminded her of his presence.

"No," she said, retreating, "I won't behave like Bluefinch. So this is where she fell? But where are we, Chel? Where have you taken me? It doesn't go any further up from here."

"You wished to see the place I go to," said Chel.

Francesca suddenly grew anxious. "Did your father bring you up here?" she inquired. "Did he climb down from here into the valley? Did you go with him?"

"Nobody could climb down from here," said Chel, pointing to the sheer wall of rocks. "My father never took me with him and I don't

know where he went. When he went away from home I ran away, too, and I found this place myself. Here nobody could catch me."

"Catch you," repeated Francesca, in renewed terror. After hearing that Chel knew nothing of his father's errands she had just begun to breathe more freely. "Chel, what did you do to be afraid of being caught? Please tell me everything! Just look at all the beauty around you here. Do you see these lovely flower-faces which all look up at heaven? God sends them sunshine and that makes them unfold. In gratitude therefore they send up their perfect fragrance and sparkle with delight. Did you never gaze up at the sky here with the thought, 'Up there is our good Father, Who also looks down on me?' "

"Yes, I did," said Chel.

"Please, Chel, don't leave me in doubt and anxiety any longer. What have you done up here? Why did you hide up here?" Francesca had seized the boy's hands and gazed at him with intense affection.

"But are you going to take everything away

from me and forbid me to do it any more?" he asked, already conquered.

"I'll do whatever is for your welfare, and I'll only forbid what brings you harm, Chel. Speak now!"

"Then I will show it to you," said Chel, turning towards the side where the precipice was least sheer.

"What are you going to show me, child?" asked Francesca, surprised, quite willing at first to follow. "But, Chel, I can't possibly climb down there," she said at last, timidly pulling back her foot.

"It's just a little way to go. Only to those rocks. You'll be able to get there, for I'll hold you tight," said Chel. His hand proved a secure support, for his bare feet climbed as surely as those of a little chamois. Francesca descended cautiously, leaning one hand on Chel and grasping with the other the branches of the ground-pines which grew upon the rocks. When they had reached the overhanging roof formed by the projecting rock, Chel led his companion quite cleverly to the slab of rock

beneath, and there was plenty of room for both to stand here. For an instant Francesca looked at the yawning abyss below her, then turning about she found herself at the entrance to a cave. The sun lit up a good part of it, but beyond that it lay in darkness. A table and chair stood there. Both were fashioned as simply as possible, consisting of four thick posts stuck into uneven boards by four holes. On both table and chair, as well as on the floor of the cave, lay heaps of fragments of glass which gleamed in various colors. Francesca had to stoop a little to enter. She sat down at once on the chair, from which position she could look at everything at her leisure. Several sheets of paper, with something painted on them lay before her. Francesca also realized now why the pieces of glass shimmered so brightly. On each was a different color, and such curious colors as Francesca had never seen. She examined the papers. "What is this, Chel? Who did these?"

"I," he answered, blushing deeply.

It was a picture of white lilies and roses

which climbed over a tombstone, together with some curious-colored flowers, and strangely yellowish-green ivy, which surrounded the stone and flowers. She knew it at once, for it was a copy of her own painting. It was drawn so delicately and imitated the whole scene so faithfully that Francesca gazed at it with pleasure, despite the odd colors of the leaves and flowers.

"Did you make these Alpine violets too, and this moss here? And these anemones?"

Chel nodded in the affirmative, but he still seemed embarrassed.

Francesca put aside these papers which for the present had engrossed her whole attention. She had come for another purpose.

"I'll talk about these later on," she remarked. "Tell me now whom you meet in this cave, Chel? What do you do here?"

"Are you going to take everything away from me? Will you forbid me to paint any more, too? Are you angry with me?" were Chel's words.

"Of course not. You must come to me in

school and I'll show you how to do it much better. Also I'll give you good colors and you'll just see how different they will look. But tell me honestly now how you spend your days and nights?"

A sudden transformation had come over the boy. He threw back his hair as if to give vent to his inner agitation. All fear and anxiety had suddenly left his face. Instead his eyes showed such brightness as Francesca could not have thought possible a moment earlier.

"Oh, oh!" he exclaimed, "you are really not angry and you will even give me some colors? I know how different the flowers will look then. Now I'll tell you everything I know. What must I tell you first, then?"

"Where did you go and what did you do when your father left you for whole days and nobody knew anything about you?" asked Francesca.

"I always ran outside," replied Chel, lifting his sparkling eyes honestly to Francesca. "My mother was dead and I used to go with the other boys. Sometimes we had a fight, and

when we threw stones at each other and I hit one of them, he always cried, 'I'll tell my mother.' Then he would run home and the mother would come and beat me. You see I couldn't tell my mother when they gave me blows. In the end I ran quite away so they wouldn't find me. The higher I went the lovelier flowers I could find, and I wanted to have them all. So I picked huge bunches and taking them with me I would look at them very hard and this made me think how wonderful it would be to copy them, for they were always faded by night. Father often had a piece of paper and a pencil in the drawer, and I would take these and begin to imitate all the flowers. But I wanted to know so badly how to make colors. I knew they were not a bit like flowers without the color. So I got the idea of getting huckleberries and squashing them. These made a fine deep blue, with which I could paint quite nicely. And the dark red berries on some bushes in the woods gave me a deep red color. But I always wished for another brush, for mine was huge, one father had once

used for painting something. I made little fine ones out of it, tying up the bristles firmly, but they were too rough and didn't work. So I took my fingers sometimes and where the fingers were too broad I took the stem of a flower. But that didn't do well either, because it wouldn't hold the color."

"Chel," Francesca interrupted at this point, as the boy seemed to be absolutely lost in his recital, "tell me now why you did not take your meals with the peasants after your father died? You should have done so. Where did you get your food?"

"I went several times," Chel continued. "The first who gave me a lunch was the Metzler On-the-Heights, and he said that one like me who did nothing and was just like a tramp should not be fed at all. At the Metzler's By-the-Stream they said I was a scoundrel and would always be one, and that it was no fun to help such a rascal. I went to the Metzler Beyond-the-Stream and the Unter-Metzler and one other, and all said something to me like that. I didn't go back to them.

When I was hunting for the flowers on the pasture I would see a goat sometimes and I would drink the milk from her. I knew Bluefinch the best of all, and she was so fond of me that she followed me wherever I went. As Bluefinch was always with me, I made a bargain with her. I said to her: 'Bluefinch, I'll find you the very best herbs which grow up on the pastures and as many as I can find you, but you must give me milk for them in return.' And that's what we always did."

"But, Chel, that was wrong," Francesca interposed. "The goat belonged to the Watchman, the milk belongs to him, too. You can't make a bargain with a goat belonging to some one else."

Chel was a trifle surprised. "Yes, but I gave her great heaps of good herbs and no other goat gave milk as good as hers. But I'll keep on," the boy resumed his tale, "just to show you how clever Bluefinch is. Once I had just squeezed myself into a thicket, because I wanted to find a place between the fir trees where I could hide away my papers and

pieces of glass. You see, over the goat-stable at the Unter-Metzler's, where I was supposed to sleep, everything was open and they could easily take them from me. That time I happened to come out on the lovely mountain meadow above. When I ran about to see all the flowers, Bluefinch came after me. She even found me through the thicket, she is so clever. So I said, 'Just wait a little till I have seen the flowers, Bluefinch, then we'll go and hunt for some good herbs for you.' But suddenly I couldn't see her any longer and I called and called. I heard her bleat but I couldn't see her. I looked down over the rocks, but she wasn't there. Then I heard her bleating from under this roof of rocks. I climbed about a little, till I got down to her and to this place by the cave. Bluefinch stood here bleating gaily, as if she meant to say, 'Look at the fine room I found you.' I was terribly pleased and at once made myself a chair and table. Also I brought everything up here, for now I could do what I wanted and nobody could find me. Only Bluefinch came here regularly, but

once she was very foolish and instead of going round by the rock she slipped and fell straight down as far as those bushes. There she got caught and I could hardly pull her up again. Since then she hasn't come back. Oh, if I only knew how poor little Bluefinch is! Perhaps you know?"

"No, I really don't," Francesca answered. "But we always get off our main subject. Tell me where you spent all your nights, Chel, when you didn't go to the Unter-Metzler's."

"Up here and nowhere else," said Chel innocently. "When I had painted a few flowers I brought them to the shopkeeper's wife in the village and she gave me bread for them and also paper, so I could paint more pictures. When I had no clothes left, she would also give me some old clothes from her own boys. The flowerpot came from her, too. When I saw it, I said I'd like to have it and asked her how many painted flowers I should make her for it. She said six. I always went down when it was dark, so the boys wouldn't catch me and tear everything up, and when I returned

it was always late at night. If the Unter-Metzler had heard me go to his stable as late as that, he would have been angry and probably have whipped me the next morning. He always said I was a ruffian whenever he laid eyes on me. Once the boys saw and trapped me because they noticed I carried something in my hands I wouldn't show them. They pulled me from all sides but I got hold of one and gave him such a blow that he tumbled all the way down the meadow into the stones below. He got a bang on his head, and for punishment they put me into the stone pit. Oh," Chel shuddered, "and when they were going to lock me up there again on account of Bluefinch, you helped me. I can never forget that, for I threw a stone at your house, too."

"Chel, did you remember what I said to you once? And do you know who placed this interest and pity for you in my heart, just as you were going to that awful punishment?" asked Francesca.

"Yes, I did, sometimes," replied the lad, "and I was able to put those verses together,

too, you read to me that evening, for mother prayed them by my bed, too. I said them every night before going to sleep."

As Francesca gazed at the boy, she felt absolutely sure he told the truth. The dreaded revelation had been made about his curious life, and a heavy load was suddenly taken from her. Instead a great joy was filling her, making her feel as if everything about her was happy, too: the birds on the fir tops, the nodding larch trees and the laughing red rock-carnations which swayed to and fro in perfect bliss.

"Chel," she said affectionately, laying her hand upon his shoulder, "you don't realize how wonderfully God has protected you and kept watch over you, and I believe you owe it all to your mother's prayers. But this wild life and the nightly walks must cease now! You are coming to live with me and we must come here often to your flowers and enjoy the view of these gleaming snow-peaks. You can climb down to your cave while I stay up in the meadow. Come and help me up now."

"May I take everything with me?" asked Chel, throwing a longing glance at his rough paints and uncouth brushes.

"Take your pictures along and leave the rest here," Francesca bade him. "We won't need it and you can always find it if you return to your rocky castle."

Chel packed up his papers and led his companion firmly along the rocks up to the mountain meadow. She cast a last look at the chain of snow-giants and shimmering pyramids, then gathered a huge bunch of Alpine flowers. Chel had picked so many in a few moments that he could hardly hold them in his hands. At last they went downwards to the valley.

CHAPTER VII

TUMULT AND PEACE IN HINTERWALD

CHEL had slept on the bench in Francesca's room, and when she entered next morning, he was painting again. But this time he did not hide it from her. On the back of one of his pictures, where the strong colors had not soaked through yet, he was again copying her lilies and cross. He had seen these flowers so seldom he could not take his eyes off them. Taking away his miserable little paper, Francesca laid a firm white sheet and two finely sharpened pencils beside him. Then she took her picture from the wall and placed it conveniently on the table right before his eyes.

"You can work here all day, if you want to, Chel, and you won't have to go to school yet," said the teacher. "But go to the pump first and wash yourself. Katherine will go, too. She knows how it has to be done."

Chel gazed in speechless joy at the pencils and paper, then he rushed out to the pump. When Francesca was done with her school duties, she looked into her room. Chel was still sitting at the table, working intently at his little picture. Then she left the house to walk up to the Watchman, whom she found just coming out of his stable.

"How is Bluefinch?" asked Francesca, after a short greeting.

"She is jumping around again as merrily as ever for the last few days," he replied with self-importance. "She is a perfect wonder! To think of her being able to jump higher than any of the other goats when she had a broken leg such a short time ago. But she is changed since her leg was fractured, and I can't make it out. She gives much more milk since then, but the wonderful quality is gone. Yes, the savor is completely missing."

Francesca did not find it wise to give an explanation of these curious circumstances, for she knew at once what was the reason. She first wanted to broach another subject. "I

have taken Chel into my house and I mean to keep him with me," she began. "I should like you very much to fit up a little room for him, and I'll get whatever furniture is needed. It won't be hard. All you will have to do is to make a window in the correction-room, and to put a good floor there. That will be all. When your boys come to school, I expect to manage them without that correction-hole for punishment. You can be quite sure I shall never use it."

The Watchman looked at Francesca as if she were talking another language. She had been silent for quite a while when he was at last able to remark: "Well, I thought from the beginning that it wouldn't do for us to have a woman teacher. However, I never thought it would turn out like that. What can you mean? Do you think a community builds a beautiful school house with everything that is necessary only to make a change? Yes, and for what? So the worst tramp and ruffian in the neighborhood can live there! One who is so sly and wicked that no person or ani-

mal is safe from him! So you want us to build for such a one? Of course, of course!" the Watchman still growled in the most agitated manner.

"I won't say a word now concerning Chel," replied Francesca. "Your opinion about him apparently is quite settled, and I probably could not shake it if I talked till I was hoarse. Chel will prove what he is, himself, and that will help. I do not ask for anything very costly. The little place I mentioned can be easily fitted up for his abode and Chel shall live with me. I never intend to leave the boy. No, I'd rather leave Hinterwald and take him with me. Please believe me, Watchman, for I mean what I say."

Francesca turned about and went. Nani, her pupil, who had discovered at once that the school-mistress was outside talking with her father, had posted herself in the doorway, not losing a word of the conversation. Highly excited, she flew towards the neighboring house of the Ober-Metzler. "Lisi, Lisi, come out quickly," she cried to her friend who was in

the kitchen. When the girl came out, Nani said breathlessly, "Just think, Lisi, Oh, just think of it, Lisi, our teacher is going away! Just think how awful!"

"What?" Lisi cried out. "We are not as bad as we used to be and we don't go to school unwashed any more. Why then does she want to leave us?"

"Because father doesn't want to build," said Nani, the next moment furiously speeding away with the exciting news.

Lisi had no peace, either. She had to spread the news, too. Like an arrow she flew towards the other side where lived the Metzlers On-the-Heights. Not long after, the unexpected intelligence of the school-mistress's departure was flung into all the corners of Hinterwald. Nobody knew the reason for her going except that the Watchman would not build.

As it was evening, when no one was busy and everybody felt deeply concerned, it happened that either a man or woman from each house set out to see the Watchman, followed by a big gathering of children. He came out to inquire

what had happened, not without regrets that the school-teacher was not present, for he was convinced that Chel had perpetrated a new outrage.

But what he heard was something quite different. The women indignantly shouted at him, asking why he was going to dismiss the teacher. If she wanted something built she would know why, and each woman assured him she would rather carry the wood for the building herself than let the teacher go. They knew that this teacher could make something splendid out of their children, for didn't all the mothers wonder already at the clever things they could do with their hands?

Meanwhile the men had arrived too, one after another. The Ober-Metzler said he was coming to see why a teacher was allowed to go who was useful in all circumstances respecting either life or death. He had found out in his own household that she could give helpful counsel and knew some help for everything. The Unter-Metzler here took up the word, saying that he had never seen such a person and

that she would never leave the community if he had anything to say. He had never known what clean, beautiful children he had till she had come and taken them in hand. This also had had an influence upon his wife, with which he was well pleased. Metzler On-the-Heights next told how his seven boys used to tease his two girls all day, making the state of his household so unpleasant that it often drove him, a strong man, out of the house. Since the teacher had come everything was changed, and now he loved to return to his peaceful home. His boys came quietly walking after the girls, imploring them: "Please won't you mend the hole in my shirt? Please make my coat all right for Sunday," and this and that. "For my two girls have just grown too clever for anything with their needle," he explained, "besides washing and ironing shirts, which pleases the boys well. Also the girls both look so neat and fine, as if they belonged to somebody much better than old Metzler On-the-Heights." Next he wished to know what sort of building

the teacher wanted, which should prove so impossible.

At last the Watchman was able to speak and explain that it wasn't only that the schoolmistress wished for a window and a good floor in the correction-hole, but that it was all to be done for Chel, the greatest rascal in the hamlet. Yes, she was taking him to live with her. All cried out together with surprise, for they had expected some huge project, which would involve much expense and trouble.

Metzler On-the-Heights cried louder than anybody else: "So much the better, so much the better! If she can tackle Chel, it shows that she has a firm hand. Then she'll be able to manage our boys too, when they go to her in winter, and I am mighty glad. I'll cut the wood away for the window myself tomorrow."

"And I'll start working on the floor," said the Ober-Metzler.

"And I'll do my share," chimed in a neighbor, while all the others cried out, "I, too; I, too!"

Even old grandmother Hupf arrived in the

very midst of the confusion. Leaning on her stick and breathing hard, she had walked a long way in order to persuade and beg the Watchman to let the school-mistress have the building. She herself would help with her last strength to make the thing possible. The crowd dispersed now and the old woman had to turn back. This she did with a glad heart, for she had heard that the alteration would be made and the school-teacher would remain.

The Watchman was quite surprised at the turn this affair had taken. Yes, clearly he had been out-voted. "She is a good sort, I must say that," he murmured to himself, upon entering his house, "but it will turn out badly just the same with the boy, I know that."

Four weeks after these events, when the girls came to school one morning, a well-dressed boy was sitting at a separate little table near the window. He was bending over his work, not looking up at all, copying a beautiful picture of a bunch of gorgeous flowers, whose bright colors attracted everybody's attention. The children thought how clever the boy must

be to be able to copy anything like that and sat down quietly in their benches. They thought he was a relative of Francesca's, for the lad's face was averted and his whole being was engrossed with his work. Only from time to time he threw back his thick brown hair with a rapid movement. This he had always done, only his hair had never before looked so orderly. Lisi now jerked her neighbor's sleeve so that the material nearly gave way.

"It's Chel; look, look, it's Chel!" Lisi whispered in immense excitement. "I bet a thousand guldens with you that it's Chel."

"Yes, and I bet twice as much that it isn't," Nani replied with courage. "My father said only today that Chel has been up to something dreadful again, because we haven't seen him or heard about him lately. Yes, and that something frightful will soon come out, so that we'll all have to open our eyes."

"But I know it's Chel," said Lisi obstinately.

When school was over and the other girls had left very quietly in respect for the teacher's

relative, Lisi stood still at the door. She persistently looked back, till the boy raised his eyes and she caught his glance. The boy with the brand new shoes, a better coat and trousers than her brothers had for Sunday, besides a white shirt-collar, was Chel. She knew him at once, though his face was really changed and he looked no more as if he would throw stones. Lisi, gazing at him again, ran away in order to tell the miracle to the whole crowd of children. Breathless with haste to spread the news, the children flew home with their incredible report.

It was really Chel, and he had done his flowers so exceedingly well that Francesca was examining his sheet with the greatest satisfaction. Chel had worked ceaselessly and with glowing enthusiasm under the good guidance of his teacher, and was showing remarkable improvement. Francesca herself had to wonder, for she had not thought he could improve so fast. She had kept Chel in her room for the last four weeks, because she found it better to study him and get to know him before bring-

ing him to the other children; also because he was to appear among them not as the old, but as an entirely changed creature. He was not to show himself at all till she had been able to alter for him the good clothes her father had left. Chel's new bedroom had been fitted up at once and Francesca had given him a very good bed. Every morning upon awakening Chel could not help wondering at the fact that the little chamber really belonged to him and was to be his permanent home. A great, glowing happiness now was always shining from his eyes and from morning till evening he sat at his beloved painting, which, till now, he had only been able to do on the sly and with great obstacles. And what gorgeous materials he could work with, too! Chel often stopped in the middle of his task, and, happily lifting up one of his soft fine brushes, would admire it.

He would also raise the red, blue and yellow colors to the light, while his heart grew warm at the thought that he was allowed to use them for his flowers. How different and wretched the colors were he had made himself from blue

and crimson berries! How miserable, too, were the pieces of glass he put them in! When Francesca had praised him, saying that he might become a painter if he continued as he was doing, Chel thought his heart would burst for joy. Only sometimes a shadow would cross his shining eyes, which reminded one of the old Chel. If Francesca asked the meaning of this, he would quickly change his whole expression, saying it was nothing.

After examining his sheet of field flowers a long while, Francesca returned it to the boy. "Chel," she said, "your work pleases me more than I can say. But explain something to me. Look, you made these red anemones differently from the ones on this printed sheet. Why did you do it?"

"I know those flowers so well," he said, "for so many grow up near the cave. They all look like those I made, and the seed is that way, too, and not like those here. I have looked at them many, many times."

Francesca smiled. "You did quite right to make them that way," she said pleasantly. "It

is good for your work, Chel, that you know your flowers so minutely. You paint much better than I do. I have often noticed that. You'll bring great credit to your teacher some day."

The gleam of joy on Chel's face was quickly followed by a shadow which seemed to settle on his brow. The boy said not a word.

"What is the matter, Chel?" asked Francesca. "What I said can't possibly make you unhappy."

"Oh, no, no, but—" Chel hesitated.

"Go on and tell me everything," she encouraged him.

"When I feel so happy that I'd like to sing and shout," Chel began again, "I suddenly have to think of a dream I have very often. I dream that you have gone away and that the boys again catch me and compel me to throw stones at them. Then I have to hide and do all my painting secretly again. And after a while they catch me and put me in the dark pit, and you don't help me any more, for I don't really belong to you. Oh, everything

will be over then." Chel turned, and large tears were in his eyes.

"Come, Chel," said Francesca, taking hold of his hand, "you won't be afraid of this any more if I tell you that you really belong to me and that I have taken you to live with me for good. I'll be a mother to you, and a mother owns her child, doesn't she, Chel?"

Chel held her hand in the tightest grasp, as if he would never let her go. After he had wiped his tears aside his eyes gleamed as never before. "Oh, oh," he cried at last, "now I can also say, 'I'll tell my mother,' when they want to hurt me. Now I, too, have a mother! Shall I never, never have to leave you?"

Francesca assured Chel that he was her son now for always and that she would never leave him. In case she left Hinterwald she would take him with her.

The whole community was astonished at the miracle the teacher had wrought with Chel, and this augmented everybody's good opinion about Francesca enormously. Nothing pleasant ever came to pass that people did not think

Francesca was at the bottom of it, and everyone would have considered it a veritable misfortune if she had left them. Even the Watchman had come to respect Francesca and was only too glad if his wife did not remind him too frequently of the little speech he had made so often after the new teacher had been elected: "I said from the beginning a woman wouldn't do."

Till winter-time the days passed in their accustomed regular round, Chel always working silently beside the girls. This suited Francesca the best, because she could thus supervise Chel's work from hour to hour. In winter a large number of boys came to school and Francesca's tasks were not few nor easy. She knew how to tame her boys, however, with love and stimulating tasks, and she never needed the correction-hole others had thought so essential. Chel was very quiet and kept mostly to himself. He proved an eager and very gifted pupil in everything he had to learn now. But he always looked forward most to his evenings with Francesca, when she would

read beautiful stories aloud to him while he painted. He was always reluctant to go to bed, and hated to waste precious time in sleeping. Only on Sundays Chel did not mind discarding his painting and his books, for then he and Francesca would wander up to the flower-pasture and the cave. Nobody knew where the two were going, but all stood still and gazing after them would mutter to each other, "It is hard to understand how the worst ruffian and good-for-nothing has turned into the neatest and best lad of our whole community." Only old grandmother Hupf could explain it: "I am certain that it makes a great difference if a mother keeps on praying for her little one. Chel's mother begged God night and day to watch over her boy, because she knew she would die soon and leave him."

Only one living being knows the flower-pasture where Chel and Francesca go, and she often comes tripping after them with light feet and rubs tenderly against Chel. This is Bluefinch. Chel knows very well where to find the most luscious herbs for her still, and

he spares no trouble in getting them for her. He loves his old friend who has shared so many bitter hours with him and sweetened them for him. But he never touches her milk now, however long she may bleat and offer it to him. He knows now that would be wrong. On many a Sunday evening Francesca sends Chel down to old grandmother Hupf in order to bring her some comfort and refreshment, and on these occasions the old woman makes Chel sit by her and then begins to talk to him about his mother. She relates how Chel's mother prayed for him continuously, being convinced she would have to leave him and go away. All little Chel would have then would be the protection of God in heaven. After these talks Chel always remembers his mother more vividly, how she took him on her lap and prayed with him when he was tiny. It does his heart good, too, to have again found the prayer she had loved, which he is able to say now.

At the end of winter Francesca wrote

the following letter to a friend of her father in the city:

"Honored Professor:

You urged me last year to make you some illustrations for a large work on botany. I had to refuse your offer because I felt unable to do the task on account of knowing too little about some of the specimens. In case you should not have found anybody for the task yet, I can recommend to you a young man who paints beautifully, has the necessary knowledge, and is very gifted.

With best greetings,

I am, truly yours,

Francesca St...."

Francesca received an answer in a short time and as soon as spring had come and the first flowers blossomed, she sent Chel out every morning to gather a little bunch of the most perfect specimens he could find of just one flower. These she placed in a glass in front of Chel, and a picture of the same flowers from a book. Francesca bade the boy paint the ones before him as nearly as possible as he saw them. When summer came Francesca herself

set out to the heights with Chel in order to show him which flowers had still to be gathered. Chel in these days hardly knew when he was happiest, for while devoting himself to his work, which he adored, he always felt like the happiest creature on God's earth, yet when he was with his teacher again, who led him with such kindness and showed such satisfaction in his progress, he was radiant, too. In his walks with her to his beloved heights when he would hear the soughing of the pine trees and see all the well-known flowers gaily nod to him, his heart seemed to expand with bliss. Yes, he was able to enjoy everything now without fear and trembling, without the least secrecy and hiding on his part. These thoughts filled him full of joy.

One evening both came back from the heights, Francesca with both hands full of Alpine roses which now were gleaming on every slope, while Chel had in one hand a bunch of gentians, his other arm encircling Bluefinch's neck. The clever animal, having discovered long ago that her dear friend could

always be found at their old favorite meeting-place, came daily to receive her luscious herbs from Chel. She never left his side till the boy went home. When the first little houses became visible, Chel gently stroked the little creature's back, saying, "Go home now, Bluefinch; it is better that you go back alone." This took place again on this day, and Bluefinch, obeying, made no objections. Both thought that if the Watchman noticed their mutual understanding he might prevent their further intercourse.

When Francesca entered her room, she discovered a package on the table. Opening it, she hurriedly read the accompanying letter. "Chel, we have succeeded," she cried, rejoicing. "Now your work is justified before everybody and you could even keep it up if I were not with you. Come, look! All this money belongs to you." With this the teacher poured a large number of silver pieces on the table.

Chel, after staring at the glinting coins a moment, threw them a hostile glance and turned away.

"Why do you look that way? Aren't you delighted with the first rewards of your labor?" asked Francesca.

"And since I got these do you really not want to stay with me any more?" asked Chel with suppressed sobs. "Then I don't want them."

"No, of course I do," said Francesca. "I only mean that till now nobody here thought you could work and do anything which had any value. Now they shall see they were all wrong. The gentleman who sends you this money likes your work so much that he asks you to continue with it. You have to paint many more flowers like the first you made and you'll get the same amount of money for them. I think you'll never lack work from now on, for you'll be able to make them better all the time, and each year you'll have more orders. Oh, I am so happy, Chel!"

"But this belongs to you, you showed me everything," said Chel, pointing to the money.

"No, no, you earned the money with your work. Of course, we'll save it up for the pres-

ent." As Francesca began to gather up the money, she paused suddenly. "Or have you some special wish?" she asked. "You can tell me, Chel."

"Yes, I have," he answered.

"How much do you think you'll need?"

Chel pondered a while. "I'd like to have them changed into franc pieces. I'll need twelve."

Francesca gazed at the boy with surprise, but having confidence in him she decided not to interfere. She brought out her own money-box and exchanged the big coins for twelve francs.

Chel cast a look of joy at them and then ran off, leaping. He first came to a little house not far from the school house, where lived the Metzlers By-the-Stream. Chel had once eaten his lunch here. Running at once into the empty room, he laid a franc piece on the table and called out to the woman who stood at her range in the kitchen, "I've paid you off." From there he went to every one of the six houses where he once had had a meal. At the

Unter-Metzler's he entered last. Laying down six francs he said, "I have paid off the community now."

The boy had never forgotten that the Unter-Metzler had said that the whole community was suffering from a tramp like him, who did not appreciate his bed.

That Chel had not only earned money, but had even thought of paying off debts that most others would not have considered such at all, made a deep impression upon the people in Hinterwald. Yes, Chel, who a short time ago had been thought the worst vagabond and good-for-nothing, was on the way to become an honored and well-to-do gentleman. And this the school-mistress had brought about in a single year. All the parents were very sure she could make something wonderful out of their boys, too. Yes, they were so sure that they would not have let her go at any price.

An experience the Watchman had about this time made him also reflect even more than he did over Chel's transformation. Standing thoughtfully under the door of his stable with

a milk bucket in his hand, he several times tasted the milk Bluefinch had just given him. He had noticed quite a while ago that his favorite was again giving the delicious milk she had lost at the time she had broken her leg. But much stranger still was the fact that not only the aromatic quality of her milk had returned, but that Bluefinch gave quantities of it, much more than any other goat. He had pondered over this fact quite frequently without finding an explanation. Just now an idea had occurred to him which he was weighing deeply. That same moment his wife came out in order to fetch the milk she had been waiting for in vain. "I saw something which made me think," he said. "It is absolutely clear there must be a good reason when a goat gives milk which is as different from the milk of the rest as honey from ditch-water, and also gives more than other animals. I have studied this for a long time and couldn't find the reason for it. Tonight when I came home from felling wood I looked up towards the pass to see if any wood was being slid down from there.

Suddenly I saw the school-teacher coming down the trail with her boy, and Bluefinch walked right between them. The goat walked quietly and confidingly beside the teacher as if she belonged to her. I just wonder if it could be possible that the teacher's influence has made the improvement in the goat."

"Naturally," said the wife, convinced. "If she can make the most industrious workman and gentleman out of a boy with the worst reputation in the country, I don't see why she shouldn't make a fine goat still better. You see yourself how well she means with us now, don't you? And I hope you won't any more repeat what you used to say, 'I said from the beginning a school-mistress wouldn't do.' "

THE FAIRY OF INTRA

THE FAIRY OF INTRA

CHAPTER I

A GARDEN ON LAGO MAGGIORE

The high peaks of the Simplon Chain rise white and gleaming above the sunny street which leads by the flowery shores of the Lago Maggiore from Fondo Toce to Intra.

"Have you seen the Fairy of Intra yet?" asked the owner of an old country house on the lake, standing beside his garden gate. He was accosting a lady who was just coming back from her daily stroll beside the lake. She was boarding with him during the beautiful months of spring.

"You are asking me this question for the third time, Mr. Riccardi," she replied, smiling. "I take the same walk every day and I intend to do so quite often still. But I have not had a single glimpse of your fairy. Where does she come from and where can she be seen? I suppose she lives in a little fairy house? But how is this supposed to look?"

"Nobody knows where she comes from," Mr. Riccardi answered, "but I am quite sure you have often seen her on your daily wanderings, Mrs. Iris. She lives in a regular human dwelling in one of the loveliest gardens on the lake. You must know the garden if I tell you that dark and light roses hang over the wall there and that many exotic plants are growing near the house under large magnolia trees."

Mrs. Iris, who had passed the beautiful property every day, knew it at once, for she always felt unable to tear herself away from its charm and beauty. The roses hung in thick clusters over the wall, and higher on the lawn stood the blossoming magnolia trees. Aloe and cactus held bright red flowers toward the sky in their stiff, green arms, and golden yellow blooms sprinkled the laurel hedges. Mrs. Iris loved this garden with its delicious fragrance of heliotrope.

"But why do the people call the young girl a fairy?" she asked. "Isn't she just a common mortal like us, who happens to be particu-

larly fortunate in living in such beautiful surroundings?"

After reflecting a while Mr. Riccardi said, "Everybody calls her that."

"But why?"

"I think because she looks as transparent as a fairy and her coloring is so different from people here. Did you notice her exquisite light hair, fair complexion and fine blue eyes? Besides this, her face has a curious expression, and when she stands among the lovely flowers and looks down at the street, one has to think of the magic bird in the story which is said to sing of woe, of woe, of woe!"

Mrs. Iris had now grown more interested in the frail girl than she had been before. Thinking that Mr. Riccardi knew more about the girl, she begged him to tell her, too. But he shook his head. "No, I know nothing more about her than that I saw an old ragged woman on her garden-wall the other day, who was eagerly praying to herself. When I asked her for whom she was praying she said, 'For that girl up there with the golden hair,' and with

this she pointed to the garden. But I am quite sure, Mrs. Iris, that if you have once seen our fairy, you won't give up till you find out all about her that is possible. I'd like to make a large bet with you on that."

"I do not bet," said Mrs. Iris, smiling, "but if your prophecy comes true I promise to tell you everything I have been able to discover."

CHAPTER II

ON THE MOUNTAINS IN UNTERLAND

Above Stans in Switzerland several families had settled in small wooden houses high up on the green mountain slopes. Often one thought that a cottage clinging to the steep abyss like a bird's nest must be the last; but then one still higher would suddenly be discovered. In summer-time it was delightful to run down the green pastures or race about in the soaring wind, but in winter the snow lay so deep about the huts here that the biggest men could hardly wade through it, not to speak of little children. The long, long winters proved very hard, and the people were compelled to lead a very spare existence, because many little ways of earning money for young and old were completely closed.

But just now it was summer-time and the evening sun was shining down on the green

meadows. In one of the cottages highest up the mountain the door stood so wide open that the bright rays fell into the smoky kitchen where a woman stood at her small range, stirring the yellow cornmeal about with vigorous arms. A tired wanderer, leading a little girl by the hand, was climbing up very slowly from below, and now she reached the cottage. The housewife stopped for a moment and came out to see who was coming. "I don't know who they are," she said to herself. "I think they must be mistaken in the cottage. She looks far from well," she added, before going back to work. For a moment the two wanderers stood still to rest. The woman was panting hard and had grown white from exhaustion. Meanwhile the delicate little girl tried to stand still beside her mother, but she could not do it, for the brisk mountain wind was blowing her about and she could not resist its power. But she looked quite rosy from the invigorating breeze.

"Can't you go on, mother?" asked the child. "Can't I pull you up? Let me do it with

both arms." She was eager at once to try the experiment, but the mother said in a friendly way, "No, Renzeli, you are much too weak. Just go on and I'll follow you. I am very tired, but we are nearly up now."

In order to help the mother if possible, the child held her hand firmly. Now they were up and approached the open door. The woman stepped outside again.

"You must be coming to the wrong house," she accosted the stranger. "This belongs to Aloys Wildheuer and you couldn't be looking for him."

The pale woman had come nearer.

"I know my own father's house well enough, though I haven't been here for ages," the stranger replied with a sad smile on her frail face. "This wasn't your home yet when I left. Isn't Aloys here?"

The woman had opened her eyes very wide during this speech, staring at the stranger as if she were a ghost.

"You can't possibly be Emerenz?" she asked in fright. "That isn't possible. Gracious, how

different you looked when I saw you the last time, sitting high up on that glorious carriage! You even wore a grand hat with yellow ribbons! Do you remember? Is this your child? Are you married? Where is your husband? But how sick you look! Don't think Aloys will recognize you, for nobody could. He isn't home yet, and he only comes back at night."

"Please let me sit down a little in the house first, Seppe," begged the sick woman. "I can hardly stand any more. I'll answer all your questions by and by. I suppose I can stay here till Aloys comes, for I must talk with him."

"I suppose you can," retorted Seppe, jerking open the door of a little room beside the kitchen and wondering how her sister-in-law could ever get down the mountain again that night if she waited for Aloys to come home. And where should she and the child sleep, if that wasn't possible?

"When I have finished cooking supper, I'll come, too," she cried before banging the door and returning to her pan.

"Did you live here when you were little,

mother?" asked Renzeli, as soon as the mother had begun to breathe more easily. The woman gazed thoughtfully about from her corner.

"Yes, I lived here, and everything is still the same, though it seems to me as if everything in the room had grown smaller, yes, even the windows. On the narrow stairs beside the stove Aloys and I often sat together, sharing everything that had been given us, or we cried when we were unhappy. On cold winter evenings when the storm wind howled around the hut and everything was trembling, we clung to each other behind there with cold and fright. But we always were able to tell each other things which made us forget our fear and hunger. This we often experienced in winter-time.

Meanwhile the woman had finished her task in the kitchen and came in to set a few plates on the table.

"I am sure you won't mind eating something after your climb," she said in rather inhospitable fashion. "Why didn't you manage a little better, Emerenz? If you had come to see your brother early in the morning, you

could have returned at a reasonable time. How far do you still mean to go tonight? Are you staying down in Stans?"

"I came from Stans now, but I am anxious to talk to Aloys. I must ask his opinion about something," the sister-in-law replied, abashed. "Don't take any trouble about giving us anything to eat. We are not terribly hungry, for I took a piece of bread along with me."

At that moment the heavy steps of a man were heard outside.

"He is coming sooner than I thought," said Seppe, opening the door. When Aloys entered, his sister rose to meet him.

"Do you still know me, Aloys?" she asked, stretching out both hands. "I suppose you don't mind my coming back to your home and being in the old room again? Oh, everything is still the same here!"

"Good gracious, Emerenz, is it you?" cried Aloys, seizing and shaking the proffered hand. "Of course it is; of course! But what ails you? You don't look well. How different you looked the time you went away with the Baron.

Did you get married, Emerenz? Is this your little girl? Remember, you haven't written for many, many years. Yes, it is true you got no answers, either. Give me your hand, little girl, I am your mother's brother and you don't need to be afraid of me."

Renzeli stepped out from behind her mother and willingly laid her tiny hand in the big one of her friendly-looking relative.

"Come, we'll have supper together," he said, leading the child to the table. "And you sit down too, Emerenz. You look as if you might drop down any moment from sheer weariness."

Emerenz willingly obeyed and while the wife went out to get the supper she moved close up to her brother. Then she asked in a whisper. "Can you keep us here for the night, or do you think Seppe will mind very much? I wouldn't like to be the cause of a quarrel in your family, Aloys."

"How can you think I wouldn't keep you here for a night?" answered the brother quickly. "Besides, you couldn't possibly go down the mountain tonight, for you don't look

fit for such an exertion. We'll eat first and then we'll sit a little while outside the hut and talk as in old times. We always enjoyed it more than the stove-bench in winter-time when we were huddled up together in order to be less cold. Do you remember?" said Aloys, laughing at the recollection. "Our boys don't act like that. They prefer to hit and kick each other and keep warm that way."

Seppe came in now with the cornmeal porridge, which proved welcome to everybody.

"What is keeping the boys?" Seppe asked her husband when the meal was over.

"They'll soon be here; they are bringing down the hay," Aloys replied. "Go and prepare a bed for my sister and the child. They are going to sleep with us tonight."

"Are they? And where, I should like to know?" asked Seppe crossly.

"In the boys' room." replied the husband. "They can sleep on the floor for once. They sleep soundly anywhere. If we have no more pillows for them, a little hay will do."

Here Seppe went out, murmuring something

to herself. The child was so tired from the exertion of the climb that her eyes had closed. Curled up in her corner, she was fast asleep.

"Let her sleep till things are ready," said Aloys, "and come out with me a while. You can tell me everything better if we are alone."

Brother and sister went outside and sat down on a narrow wooden bench. This had been nailed to the hut for years and had grown dark from age. The moon had risen, lighting up the valley, and they could not help remembering their childhood, when they used to talk over their plans and ambitions for the future.

"Tell me now how you have fared, Emerenz," Aloys began encouragingly, but his sister was still silent and thoughtful. After a while she began: "Do you remember what father used to say, Aloys? 'The light days of youth are followed by the heavy ones of age.' During the last years I have lived through I have often been obliged to think of those words. I never understood them when I was young and things went well with me. I thought everything must be that way; I

didn't realize that God gave me a life full of joy and happiness without my truly deserving it. I was not grateful enough and I didn't beg Him to keep me on the right path. That's why I left it, I suppose."

"What did you do, Emerenz? Don't you care to tell me? Did the good family you were living with send you away?"

"No, not that, but I did my benefactors a wrong and that brought about all my sorrows. I'll tell you about it, Aloys, if you wish to know. After I had been a year with the Baron, a new butler came to the house, a Hungarian. It wasn't very long before he said I must become his wife and I was awfully pleased. For a while the Baron and his wife were able to keep me from marrying him by talking to me like the most affectionate parents. They said I was much too young to know what I was doing and they must hold me back. I was just about eighteen years old then. However, we succeeded in marrying and went to Hungary together, where my husband intended to make a good position for himself. But he

did not find what he was looking for, and we wandered about a great deal. Then I grew very ill, and he at last decided to become a soldier. He went away, and I have never since heard from him. I do not know whether he is alive or dead. I travelled about to find some work, but my strength had given way, and it was impossible to find a place where I could keep my child. I won't complain to you about what I went through and I shouldn't have come at all if I had not felt that my strength wouldn't hold out much longer. For my child's sake I am doing what I shouldn't have done for anything else. But you have children yourself, Aloys, and you know what one must do for them. I came to ask you if I may die here and leave you the child, who has no one else on earth to love her. I hope she won't be a burden to you for long, because she has been through so much misery and sorrow herself that she is very mature. She'll try hard to make her own way in the world as soon as she is able."

The brother looked a trifle aghast at first,

pushing his cap to and fro on his head. He did not quite know what to say. "This is a bit unexpected," he admitted finally. "Of course two more or less makes a difference with us, and I have quite a struggle to provide for us all. You know yourself how it is, Emerenz; but that isn't the chief thing I am worrying about. Seppe is a good, industrious woman who does everything she can to bring us through honestly, but I don't know how she'll take this. I can't answer you right away, as I should do otherwise. You understand this, Emerenz, don't you? Of course, we grew up here together, and this is your home as much as mine. You needn't talk about dying, for you'll get stronger as soon as your sorrow is not sapping your strength any more. Sleep well for the present under the old roof, and meanwhile I'll talk with Seppe. I am sure we'll be able to arrange something."

That moment the boys came tearing down from above with the hay-sled, which was being used despite there being no snow on the heights. Only thus could the vigorous mountain hay,

which had grown dry up in the sunshine, be brought down the steep slopes. Hitched in front of the sled, the boys sailed down the mountain side as if it were the smoothest coasting-track.

"Come here, boys! This is your Aunt Emerenz. Say good-evening to her," said the father to his boys. They had stretched out on the ground after their hot day's work and were comfortably enjoying the cool evening breeze. They approached and offered their sun-browned hands with a short greeting.

"I'll help you to unload later on, for the moon is very bright," continued the father. "Go in and eat first. You deserve it. There is something else inside which you'll like, boys, but I won't tell you what."

When the boys had run inside, Emerenz remarked how much they differed in their looks, wondering if their characters were unlike also. The brother informed her that they hadn't had time to grow very different, being only a year apart, and both brought up to work hard together. They were really very much alike

in their ways and manners, and if Aloys, the thirteen-year-old, or Isi, as they called him, was somewhat taller, Benedikt was broader. They were not exactly bad, but rather rough to each other, always ready to hit about. Their father had often thought how little inclination he had had for blows and fights when he was a boy of their age. This was probably on account of having lived with a sister. He would tell Seppe that a gentle little girl like Renzeli would do their two rough boys a lot of good.

Emerenz, who had begun to shiver in the cool breeze, wanted to go inside now, and her brother followed. The boys had just finished supper and were silently staring at Renzeli, who had waked up at their noisy entrance. She had wished them good-evening in a low voice, but they in their amazement had not said a word. Renzeli, pressed shyly into her corner, had watched them eat their silent meal.

"I suppose they'll begin to talk to each other tomorrow," said Aloys. "Come, boys, we'll bring in the hay now, and the little one should

get to bed at once. She is hardly able to keep her eyes open any longer."

This wish was to be fulfilled at once, for Seppe came in now to say that the bed her boys usually occupied was ready for the sister-in-law.

"Nothing here is very grand; I suppose you are used to something better," said Seppe, pushing open the small door which had neither bolt nor lock.

Emerenz thanked Seppe, assuring her hostess she had often in the last years been grateful to God for a bed not half as good as this one.

"Sleep well!" said Seppe, and went out.

"Mother," whispered the child, clinging to her mother. "I think Aunt Seppe would have been glad if we hadn't come."

"That is quite easy to understand, Renzeli. We are a burden for her and we must do what we can to help her with the housework," said the mother. "You'll help me, too, as much as you can, won't you, Renzeli?"

The child nodded with firm determination.

"Now let us thank God for helping us to get

here and let us beg Him that we may be allowed to stay. It is uncertain whether we may, and I shouldn't know what to do if they sent us away again."

Before going to sleep Renzeli sent up an earnest prayer for this, well knowing how much her sick mother was in need of rest, after working so hard and moving about from place to place to find work.

When the boys had retired to their new sleeping place on the floor, Aloys, contrary to his habit, settled down again in the room downstairs. "Seppe," he began, "sit down here, for I must talk with you." Then he told her of his decision to keep his sister and little niece in the house.

But Seppe opposed this plan most desperately, and Aloys would have given up the fight had he not been so anxious to help his sister. When his wife kept on finding new objections all the time, he was silent at last and meditated. Suddenly he said, "If you knew how clever Emerenz is with her needle you wouldn't let her go out of the house. No-

body in Stans can equal her in that, and she can sew for you even while she's ill. Besides, she may get well soon."

Seppe had never had much knack with her needle, and many a hard-earned piece of money had to wander down to an acquaintance in Stans if everybody was to look tidy for church. When she didn't say anything further, Aloys prophesied to his wife that the boys wouldn't prove half so trying from now on with Emerenz in the house. "I know what she did for me," he concluded, "when I came home as a boy with torn clothes and didn't dare to appear before father and mother. You'll never let her go, if you once see how useful she'll be to us."

CHAPTER III

WITH UNCLE ALOYS

Aloys and his sons went to work so early the next morning that his sister and little niece did not see them before they left. The journey had tired the two so much that they got up long after sunrise, while all the others had risen before the sun. When Emerenz wanted to beg her sister-in-law's pardon for sleeping late, the latter said in quite a friendly tone that Emerenz probably needed to rest a bit. She also informed the sick woman that she and her husband had decided last evening to keep Emerenz and the child, if their home was not too wretched for the newcomers. Emerenz thanked the other most heartily and added, "You know well enough it is not too bad for me, but I suppose I deserve being reminded of my past foolishness. I know I didn't value my happiness enough."

Seppe did not say anything more, and as

soon as Emerenz had eaten a piece of hard, dark bread with a cup of thin coffee, she asked if her sister-in-law had any clothes to be mended.

"More than enough," the other answered. "When every evening three people bring back torn whatever has just been mended, it isn't likely I can get it all done. I won't talk of the new shirts which should be made, but the old ones are all in rags."

Seppe now brought a heap of the torn jackets, shirts and stockings she had piled up, and it seemed to Emerenz that it must be everything the three didn't have on their backs just then. She settled down on the little bench before the house with her work, and the child who sat down beside her was told to knit a new foot for a heavy, long stocking belonging to Uncle Aloys.

When they were high up on the mountain gathering hay they always took a bread-sack along for their simple lunch, only returning at twilight in time for supper. When the two women and the child sat down to their mashed

potatoes, Seppe said that she was pleased that Renzeli could knit, which was a good occupation for bad weather. In summer-time it was more profitable to gather strawberries and take them down to Stans to sell. Tomorrow would be Sunday. Her boys always gathered the berries then, and this would give them a chance to show her how to do it.

After dinner Emerenz at once settled down to her work again, and Renzeli, taking up the huge stocking, quickly swung herself to the bench. Though the coarse yarn and the heavy needles bent her thin fingers, she looked contented. There was nothing she loved better than to sit beside her mother and listen to whatever she would relate to her. A fresh wind blew around the hut, making all the little flowers and grasses on the green around them nod.

"Mother, won't you please tell me again about the good Baron and his wife?" begged Renzeli. "On our way here you promised to tell me everything from the beginning to the

end. You said you would do it as soon as we reached your old home."

"Yes, I'll tell you," replied the mother. "Everything comes back to me so vividly here that it seems more like twelve months than twelve years since I went down to church that Sunday morning. I was just seventeen then, and it was a glorious summer morning with the sun shining brightly. My brother and I were so glad it was Sunday, for we had worked hard during the week. It happened to be haying time when I had to go high up to the rocks every morning at three o'clock with Aloys. There we had to work till evening on the most steep and difficult slopes. We gathered not only our own hay, but other people's too, for father had undertaken this to earn a little money. When Sunday came and we didn't have to work, we could take off our everyday things and put on our tidy Sunday clothes and go down to Stans to church, and it was a real feast-day for us. Several strangers stood about the church that morning and among them was a very refined but delicate-looking lady

who talked to me most kindly. She wanted to know where I was living and what my work was. I pitied her, because she looked so sick and frail, and I wanted to bring a chair for her to sit down. But she refused, and as Aloys was waiting for me then, I went into the church with him. Soon after we noticed that people were getting excited and whispering to each other, and turning about, I saw that the sick lady, who was sitting close behind us, had grown so weak she had nearly fallen from her bench. An old woman, who either didn't see or was not able to give help, happened to be sitting beside her. At once I went to the lady and tried to raise her, but she had fainted and could not stir. So I took her in my arms and carried her over to the inn. Just then a gentleman came up to us. He had not been in church but had seen us coming out. There were plenty of people to help now, so I went back to church. When the service was over and I came out, the innkeeper's son stood at the door. He had been sent by the lady to fetch me. She received me very kindly and thanked

me for carrying her away. As a remembrance for me to keep she laid around me a lovely blue and white shawl. I had never seen anything so beautiful, and it felt like fine silk, but it was made of wool."

"Where is the shawl, mother?" asked Renzeli at once.

"Yes, where is it?" replied the mother. "I was able to keep it for a long time, and it always looked like new. It was my best shawl for years, but when you got ill in Hungary I was obliged to sell it because I had no more money to pay for the doctor and medicines. My landlady bought it, and every time she wore it I had to turn my head, I felt so badly. You see, it was a remembrance from my dear, kind lady who had worn it herself."

"If only you hadn't given it away!" sighed Renzeli.

"But you were so ill and might have died otherwise. I simply had to let it go. That same Sunday the lady asked me how I lived and what work I was doing at home. She wondered if my parents would make any objections

if I went to live with her, also if I was willing to go. She would like to take me with her and I could always be about her as a nurse. I was only too willing, for the lady looked so kind and gentle, and it tempted me very much to see the world a bit. I told her I would go home at once and find out how my parents felt about it. They made no objections whatever, but on the contrary, thought me very lucky. Not more than two days after that we drove away in a big travelling carriage. I sat high up beside the coachman and wore a beautiful hat with yellow ribbons, which the Baroness had given me in order to keep the sun from burning me. All Stans gazed after us. Oh, what a beautiful world seemed to lie before me! We were to go to Engelberg first, and after staying there a while were to travel further. The Baron von Stein—that was his name—had lived on a large property, and had afterwards moved to Riga, where the Baroness was born. Riga is a large city far, far away from here. But the Baroness grew very ill there and the doctors said she could only live

if she left her home and kept moving from place to place, always staying where the climate was mild and warm. First we went to Switzerland and stayed in the mountains for a while; then in autumn we travelled to Italy and in spring a little further north. But the Baroness got no better. I was always with her, waiting on her, and I loved to do it. You have no idea how good she was to me always. My master, the Baron, also made me feel as if I were doing something special for his wife when I nursed her, while, after all, I was only her maid. She was often so ill and suffering that her husband, not able to endure seeing it, would go away. Then I'd be left alone with her, and she was as affectionate and grateful to me as if I were her benefactor instead of her being mine. When she was better again after these days of suffering, she would talk to me like a mother, and the best I know and have I owe to her. It was her teachings alone which kept me up in my days of sorrow. Sometimes when I sat by her bedside she would say to me, 'You are so young and you haven't

experienced deep sorrow yet. However, it may come to you, too. Don't forget then that there is always consolation for us in the thought that our Father in Heaven is ready to help us if we ask Him. If we do this, He helps and assists us in everything.' How often and often I repeated these words to myself when I had come to grief; the memory of my dear mistress helped me so much. I was always able to find confidence again in prayer. My courage never quite failed. I had spent two years with my dear mistress when the Baron took a trip to Vienna and left me with his wife at Lake Como. Upon his return in a few weeks he brought back with him a gay young fellow. His name was Joseph Jokai and he was to be butler in the house."

"That was my father, wasn't it?" Renzeli interrupted the mother.

"Yes, child," the other continued, "and he made our life so gay and merry. He could sing better than anybody I have ever heard, besides playing the flute and violin. I think there wasn't an instrument he couldn't play.

He could talk every language, too, and was so smart and intelligent in everything. Whatever he undertook to do, he succeeded with. Before long he said he wanted me to be his wife, and to take me to his home in Hungary, because he was tired of his position. I said I should like to do it, but I hated to leave my dear mistress and I refused to do anything to give her grief. But he thought the Baroness could find ten girls any day she could get attached to, while he wanted me only to be his wife and no other. So I decided to tell my mistress. She cried and would not let me go, and the Baron was also against the match and refused his consent at once. He was quite sure I wouldn't be happy, but I was so fond of Joseph I could not help myself and I left despite their advice. When he came to his home and birthplace, he didn't like it as much as he had hoped to. All his brothers lived in his father's house with their wives and children, and there was practically no room for us. We therefore lived for a little while with one of his relations who wasn't married, and I looked

after the house while Joseph worked in the vineyard. But that didn't last long either, for your father never could stand being settled long in one place. We went to another little property, and somewhere else after that, and so on and on. Then you were born, and I began to sew for people in order not to leave you. But we fared badly and still wandered about, finding no proper home. Your father decided at last to become a soldier and enter some foreign regiment, which would make it possible for him to send me a good sum of money for my support now and then. After going far away he wrote to me only a few times, and I think he must be dead, for I never heard from him after that. You became very ill, so that I had to nurse you day and night, and the fear of losing you robbed me of my last strength. It was then that all the good words my mistress had spoken to me came back to me, showing me how to fight against weakness and find strength and comfort. When I was able to pray again, an assurance came to me that God would not let me perish, even if I

saw no present help before me. Oh, what a relief it was to be able to pray again! I had grown so discouraged because I had neglected to do so for a long while, and yet I still had dreadful days to live through. You got better, but I had no strength to earn a livelihood. It was then that I moved up with you to the little lonely village into a dilapidated hut for which I paid only a tiny sum. Here I prayed to God every single day: 'You know, Oh God, I seek nothing more for myself. Only look after my dear child!' And in that forsaken, ruined house where no one knew about us or even noticed us, we were not quite alone, for God had His eye upon us. He had not forgotten us, for one day as I was sitting on a stone before the house, sewing a little shirt for you, a man came hurrying by on a horse. He seemed to have a long road before him, but as soon as he saw me, he halted, asking me if I was a seamstress by profession. When I said yes, he told me there was some work for me to do, also how glad he was he didn't have to go any further. I was to come with him. You remem-

ber how I went away that afternoon, Renzeli, telling you not to be frightened if I didn't come home that evening but to go quietly to bed. And you know what happened afterwards, too, for I have told you before."

"Tell me again about the child and the lights, mother," begged Renzeli.

"Well," continued the mother, "I followed the rider and he led me far up into the mountains to an old gray castle. Opening a large, heavy door, he let me in and went away. After a while an old woman-servant came out on tiptoe and conducted me through many rooms and corridors to a large, sombre room. Here lay a little girl just your age and with exactly the same light curls. She lay still and white on her little couch, for she was dead. Quietly the old woman went out again. The sight of the child went so much to my heart I began to weep, because I couldn't help thinking how the poor mother must feel about having lost this lovely child. A lady now came into the room clothed entirely in black. She looked so pale and her eyes were so swollen that I at

once knew she was the mother. When she saw me weeping, she asked in surprise if I had children, too. I told her about you and how ill you had been, also how I still worried about you because you were so frail. She wanted to know if I could make a dainty white dress for her daughter, the last one she was to wear. I was well able to do so and began my task at once. At intervals the lady would come back to talk to me. I had to tell her about our life, and when she found how forsaken we were, she asked me if I had no more relatives at home. I told her about my brother, Aloys but that I could not afford the journey to him even if I should find the courage to knock at his door. When I had finished the dress and put it on the little girl for her last journey, the mother pressed a note into my hand, saying, 'Go home with the child and travel soon. She can't get strong down there. I know that well, for many people are sick of fever in our neighborhood.' Oh, how thankful I was to God for sending me this help! At last a road had opened unexpectedly for me, and He had

done it. I was really a bit frightened, for I was very weak and I dreaded being a burden to my brother and his family. But we got along quite well and we must never forget to thank the Lord, my child, that we may stay here and that everybody is so good to us."

"And now you'll get well, too, mother, won't you?" said Renzeli, looking up at her mother with a joyful confidence in her radiant eyes.

The mother found it difficult to answer. "You see," she said after a pause, "God has always saved us out of much sorrow and misery. Everything has always turned out well in the end. Therefore, we must have confidence in Him and believe whatever He brings to be for our good."

The two just then heard Aloys returning home with his boys. The sun had sunk ever lower during the foregoing story and had finally disappeared. Aloys sat down, tired, on the bench and the boys stretched out full length on the hard ground.

"Thank heaven it is Sunday tomorrow!" said the father. "Six working days are just

about enough. I like to work, but one must have some rest if one is not to lose strength and courage. I'll make a quiet day for myself tomorrow, Emerenz, and we'll chat together as in former days. And you there," he continued, turning to the boys, "you'll want to hunt for strawberries, and you can take your little cousin and give her some fun, too. But let me tell you something. Don't hit and push her about the way you do each other. Look at her little bones! They are not made like yours, one of her small arms or legs might easily be broken." The boys, sitting up straight, examined Renzeli's arms, hands and feet till the mother called them loudly to supper.

CHAPTER IV

RENZELI LEARNS MANY NEW THINGS

Early on Sunday Aloys and his wife and boys set out to Stans to attend church. Standing in front of the cottage, the sister gazed after them with sad eyes. Aloys, who understood her feelings, looked back and called out, "Never mind, soon we'll take you and the child, too. It won't be long before you are stronger, Emerenz."

Renzeli crept close to her mother and said timidly, "Oh, mother, I hope I'll never have to go to church if you can't come, too, and I don't want to pick strawberries without you, either."

Emerenz tried to explain to the child that she should be glad to hunt for strawberries with her cousins. She would meet other children then who all enjoyed themselves together.

But Renzeli shook her head. "Oh, mother,

can't I stay home with you?" she begged.

Only when the mother said, "Don't you want to help me a little, Renzeli? If you gather strawberries, you'll get some money for them and you can bring me home some nice bread for Sunday," the child said willingly, "Oh, yes, I'll go then. But will you also get cheerful again, mother?"

This the mother had to promise in order to keep up Renzeli's courage.

As soon as the church-goers had come home, Aunt Seppe put the plates on the table. Then she called everybody together for the meal, which had been prepared more hurriedly than usual. Everybody wanted to have a long afternoon on Sunday. After putting down their spoons, the boys set out with a basket in each hand, and Renzeli followed behind.

"Remember what I told you, boys," the father called after them.

Dikt and Isi understood this injunction well, for they had not forgotten what their father had said about Renzeli's tender limbs.

According to his intention Aloys sat down

on the wooden bench and called to his sister to join him. He wanted to hear everything she had experienced since leaving her old home.

Emerenz wanted to begin several times, but always paused again while she glanced at the open kitchen door where her sister-in-law was rattling about the pots and spoons. "I'd like to help Seppe and let her have a real Sunday, too," said Emerenz, pausing once more. "She told me she'd be done right away and that she was used to doing the work alone. I'd better wait till she comes out, too."

"That won't do any good," the brother assured her. "She won't come if you wait till New Year's, for she can't ever sit down quietly on the bench. She is always busy, even if there is nothing at all to do. You can't do anything for her, she was born that way. Begin now."

Emerenz now told all her happy and sad experiences since leaving home, once more thanking her brother for giving her a home and saving her from the worst misery. Then she concluded: "The worst anxiety has been taken from my mind now, because I know you'll

be a father to the child till she is able to help herself. The only thing that troubles me is that I don't see how she is going to learn anything. She can't possibly go down to the school in Stans, for the snow is so deep in winter."

"That is out of the question, of course," agreed Aloys. "The child is like a little leaf which a strong wind might easily blow down the mountains, and she couldn't fight against our winds and storms. But it doesn't matter if she doesn't get to school. She can do something else, knit stockings and other things. Seppe won't mind."

"But, Aloys, if she has to make her own way later on she'll have to learn something. She'll never be able to do field work or anything like that. You can see that by looking at her."

"We won't look so far ahead, Emerenz," the brother soothed her, "and I am sure God will somehow take care of the child, for after all isn't she better than the sparrows? Let us enjoy the lovely Sunday now. Forget your worries for a little and think of the time when we were both children and used to sing songs

together on Sunday night." And herewith Aloys started a merry song which he sang through. But his sister, who had long ago lost her good voice, could only smile sadly at his request for her to join in.

It was the first time in her life that Renzeli had gone on a journey without her mother, and she followed her cousins shyly without speaking. They also climbed the mountain in silence. After the three climbed a considerable distance, they came to some projecting rocks. Here Renzeli suddenly heard a loud noise, and coming out on a sunny slope she saw a crowd of children busy on the ground. They constantly called to each other, "Come here! There! Let's go over there! Oh, look!" and the child knew at once what this meant, for heaps of dark red, wonderful strawberries were gleaming in the sunshine. Dikt and Isi at once threw themselves upon the best places, and Renzeli, thinking she had to stay right by them, also stooped down to gather berries. But she was pushed aside by Isi, who wanted to get them all himself.

Dikt, noticing this, cried out, incensed, "Stop that, Isi, or I'll give you one you'll remember. Father told me to watch over Renzeli, because I am older. You mustn't push her about."

When after a while Isi again found himself in his little cousin's neighborhood and the boy again shoved her aside in order to get the best strawberries himself, Dikt grew furious. "Don't touch her! Leave her alone! If you are rough with her one of her legs or arms might come off. Don't you remember what father said?"

Thus sheltered, Renzeli could gather her berries in peace, for when the other children tried to be rude with her, they felt themselves suddenly seized and flung from the spot in a way they couldn't easily forget.

Renzeli had just filled her basket. "We are done now, let's go!" cried Isi, at once starting to fly down the steep mountain side.

Dikt, who was a master at this occupation, had two baskets filled to the brim. He not only used both hands at once, but also kept his elbows busy whenever he wanted to keep a

specially good place to himself. He was always the first to be done, despite the fact that his baskets were by far the largest. Following Isi in big leaps and furious that his brother had beaten him, he cried, "It's easy enough to be the first if you don't fill your baskets. Wait for Renzeli now, for I was really done first." With this he ran ahead, and Isi, thinking that Renzeli could easily see where they were going, also started off.

Renzeli, who knew she must follow her cousins, began to run too, not knowing in the least why they went downhill even after passing their little home. The boys went rushing on, while Renzeli tried hard to keep up with their pace, but they reached their destination long before her. Renzeli now realized she was in Stans, the last town she and her mother had passed before climbing up the mountain. But she did not understand why so many children were gathered here with baskets full of strawberries, all gazing expectantly in the same direction.

Suddenly they began to yell and call,

"Strawberries, fine strawberries! Here! Here! Here!" With this they held up their baskets as high as they could reach, and a line of carriages passed by, some drawn by two, some by four horses. The children shouted and ran about, pushing each other to and fro. Whenever a carriage stopped at the hotel, a large crowd at once ran to it, for it meant a good chance to sell their wares. As the last carriage rolled down the mountain road again, they separated, most of the children singing loudly and swinging their empty baskets. Dikt surpassed everybody, he sang so loudly, for his two heaped, enormous baskets were completely empty.

"Let's go home now, quickly home!" cried Isi, who had also sold all his berries.

Renzeli at once followed, joining the two boys again, but her basket was still full.

"Good gracious, what have you done?" cried Dikt, noticing this surprising fact. "I wonder what mother will do if she sees it?"

Renzeli, comprehending that her aunt would be far from pleased at her failure, suddenly

grew frightened. When she saw how fast the boys were running up the hill the poor child felt disheartened. There was no more strength in her little legs and she felt obliged to stop and rest every few moments. Never in all her life had Renzeli done so much climbing and running about. When the boys arrived at home Renzeli was still so far down that she looked like a tiny speck.

The father was sitting on the bench before the cottage enjoying the cool summer evening. "What does this mean? Where is the child?" he called out to his boys, jumping up from the bench.

"She's coming," replied Isi.

"And she's bringing back all her berries, too. She doesn't know how to sell them, she's too young," said Dikt.

Gazing down the mountain side, Aloys at first could not even spy the child. Then running down to meet her, he found her sitting far below, crying. "What is the matter, Renzeli?" he asked sympathetically as soon as he was close enough.

The child had risen quickly and was already beginning to climb again. "I couldn't walk any more, but I suppose I can now," she said. "And I couldn't sell any strawberries," she added, frightened, her eyes full of large tears.

"Come, child, I'll carry you a little bit, for your small feet are hardly able to move any more," said Uncle Aloys, lifting Renzeli up on his arm. "Give me the basket, too, and don't be afraid, for you can sell your strawberries tomorrow."

Aloys carried the child up to the hut, where his sister was eagerly looking for her little daughter.

"May God reward you for your kindness," she said, deeply touched, and taking Renzeli from his arms she added, "and you were trying to get a good rest today!"

"That wasn't hard work, Emerenz. The child is as light as a feather," he said good-naturedly. "Take her and put her right to bed. That will be the best, for these berries might cause some hard words. But give her a piece of bread first—no, wait!" And Aloys,

going in, returned immediately with a piece of bread which he gave the child himself. "Go now, Renzeli, and sleep well. No one is going to hurt you."

Renzeli at once fell asleep, but she held tight to her mother's hand as if she were afraid of punishment even in her sleep. When Emerenz came back to the others at supper-time, she heard her sister-in-law say, "Nothing can be done with that child, she is no good for anything. It will be hard enough to keep her, for we have enough on our shoulders already."

"One must have a little patience with the small, frail creature," said Aloys, "and we'll explain to her tomorrow how she must sell her berries. She doesn't know, but she'll get along better by and by."

Seppe was silent, but looking first at her boys and then at her sister-in-law she seemed to say: "I have certainly done better with my children than you."

When Aloys sat at breakfast early next morning with the boys, Emerenz came in with Renzeli. She said the child wanted to go at

once and pick some berries and afterwards do her very best to sell them. This would make two baskets, because those from yesterday had been carefully kept in the kitchen and were still fresh. Aloys thought that Renzeli, who was as thin as a little swallow, could come quite near a carriage if she slipped through between the others. The people only needed to see her and they would buy.

But Dikt was of another opinion. "She can't get through, and they only push her about. I'll show her what she must do. Look, Renzeli, that is the way."

And Dikt began to work his elbows so energetically that he barely missed his father, and Isi unexpectedly flew as far as the door.

"You mean well, Dikt," said Emerenz, "but she couldn't do that. I think your father is right. Just try hard, Renzeli, and see if you can't squeeze through between the other children. You might get close to a carriage that way."

Renzeli now set out with one of Dikt's large baskets. It was very high and strongly made,

but Renzeli had no qualms about filling it, for she remembered all the good spots where the strawberries peeped out in great profusion from under the green leaves. When she came home long before noon with a heaped basketful, Seppe at once gave her a piece of bread and a bit of milk. Then she sent her down to Stans with the two baskets, hoping the child might be more successful if she had plenty of time. Carrying a basket in each hand, Renzeli set out again.

Aloys and the boys were home already and all the family stood expectantly at the door, gazing down the mountain side. But Renzeli was not to be seen.

"There she comes," suddenly cried Dikt, "and she is bringing back her berries. Dear me, she can hardly carry them, poor thing!"

The child was laboring up the slope with her baskets as full as when she left, and they were indeed a heavy burden.

"I said from the beginning that the child was no good and wouldn't be able to learn anything," said Seppe crossly.

Aloys stood silently, gazing first at his sister, then at the pale, tired child, who had at last reached home, deeply discouraged and unhappy. The boys were struck mute with astonishment. How could Renzeli be so stupid?

"But Renzeli," said the mother with a slight reproach in her voice, "couldn't you get near a carriage all afternoon?"

"I came close to two," replied the child, swallowing her tears, "but the gentleman in the first told me to go away and not to beg all the time. So I ran quickly away, and when a little later I came up to a coach, the woman who sat in front called out to me, 'Go away! Who wants to buy berries all the time?' Then I went away and I couldn't get close to any more."

"That's exactly what you shouldn't have done. Never run away when they tell you to," cried Dikt. "When they say 'Go away!' run after them and shout, 'Strawberries! Strawberries!' louder than ever. They always buy in the end."

"I couldn't! I had to obey them," was Renzeli's answer.

Aloys, laying his hand on Renzeli's head, said kindly, "You are right, child. Only go on as you are doing. But we must think out some means to sell your berries. I don't see why there shouldn't be a way."

Long after the boys had forgotten their weariness and Renzeli her sorrow in refreshing sleep, Aloys and his sister still sat together talking about the child's future. When Emerenz had given vent to her grief about the hopelessness of their situation, Aloys reproached her: "You must not be so discouraged, sister. Just look at all the gold the child carries on her head! That must signify something. You used to have a little more faith in God, Emerenz. Don't you remember how often you used to say to me when we were the age of our children now, 'You mustn't forget to pray, Aloys, for that makes us confident and unafraid.' I say that to you now, Emerenz."

"You are right, Aloys," the sister replied. "It is hard for me to have a joyful confidence

in God, because I can't help blaming myself, for I know I am responsible for our sorrow by acting against the advice of my benefactors. Yes, I forced myself and my child into this miserable situation. How could her golden curls ever help her? It would be much better if her limbs were sturdy and round and she were able to work hard like your boys. Oh, I wish she were strong and well."

"I suppose our Lord knows what she is in need of most," remarked the brother, "and it doesn't do any good to keep thinking of the past. If you genuinely repent of having done wrong, you also can count on God's mercy, and I am sure He approves of that more than of complaints. Just try to get back the confidence you used to have and tell yourself what you used to say to me. Sleep well now."

Early next morning Seppe inspected the berries Renzeli had picked two days ago. They were still fresh and nice, but those from the day before were still better.

"The child can pick another basketful and then go down to Stans with all three," said

Seppe, putting the potatoes on the table. "She is bound to get some sense sooner or later, like many others before her."

"I know something," cried Dikt, looking at his father.

"Say it then, and we'll know it too," replied the latter.

"Give me a little time off from work this afternoon and I'll quickly run down and make way for Renzeli. That's all she needs to sell her berries."

The father seemed quite pleased. "That's not a stupid idea," he said, "you can go, Dikt."

When the three were already quite a distance from the hut, Dikt came racing back again. Renzeli was waiting in front of the cottage for the third basket, which Aunt Seppe was bringing out.

Dikt flew up to his cousin and said hurriedly, "Just put your two big baskets under the bench here and I'll bring them down to you." Then he raced away.

Full of gratitude, the child looked after him. She knew how hard she had found it

to carry two baskets the day before, and there would be three now. When Renzeli came down to Stans rather early, the other children came running there, too, from all sides with their berries. They posted themselves near the inn and Renzeli was, as usual, far behind them. Already the tinkling of the post-horses could he heard, the sign that many carriages were coming. At that moment Dikt came flying to her, his cheeks deep scarlet from eagerness and exertion.

"Quick! Give me your basket!" he cried. "Hold on to my coat now and don't let go of me whatever happens. When a carriage comes I'll run right through their midst and as soon as I get close I'll turn about and you'll be standing in front. Then I'll give you a basket and you must call out 'Strawberries! Strawberries!' as loud as you know how. Be sure to hold up your basket very high."

Renzeli obeyed her cousin to the word, except that she could not shout as he had ordered. However, the soft, supplicating eyes must have proved effective, for in a short time all the

berries had disappeared, and heaps of small coins had rolled into the empty baskets. An old gentleman had taken the last ones, pressing a thick silver-piece into the little girl's hand. Dikt had rushed away at once.

When Renzeli was still a long distance from the house, she joyfully held out her empty baskets. Her mother, who sat before the hut, was both surprised and delighted to see the child back so soon. When the little girl was going to pour all her treasures into the mother's lap, the latter said quickly, "No, no, let's bring them to Aunt Seppe. I am glad we can bring her something too once!"

The aunt was astounded when she saw the heap of coins Renzeli poured into her hands. At sight of the large silver-piece she said with a delighted face, "Didn't I say it, Emerenz? The child is improving! Just give her time!"

In the evening Renzeli's splendid success under Dikt's assistance was discussed, and the boy's pride and joy swelled so mightily that he worked his spoon accordingly. In a moment nothing more was to be seen on his plate.

Amazed, Dikt looked about him. Did the others get done as quickly? Once more gazing at his plate to see if he might scrape together a few more crumbs, he found it heaped as in the beginning of the meal. Then he glanced at Renzeli, his neighbor, for it had not escaped him that his mother had given his little cousin three times as much cornmeal as usual and yet it had all disappeared from her plate already. Dikt knew what had happened.

"Take back a little of it," he whispered to the girl, for the gift seemed much too generous for what he had done for her.

"No, no, I have plenty," Renzeli whispered back, "and I thank you ever so much for helping me."

"I'll come every day now to help you get close to the carriages. Even if I have to crowd a few children I'll make room for you," promised Dikt.

All the inmates of the little mountain hut went to bed that evening with a light heart, for everyone was delighted that Renzeli had succeeded in bringing back her baskets empty.

CHAPTER V

A NEW LINE OF BUSINESS

All during strawberry-time Renzeli, with Dikt's help, had brought back empty baskets and numbers of fine silver-pieces. Her Aunt Seppe had rewarded the child for this in a way which seemed the most satisfactory to her boys—namely, a huge portion of cornmeal for supper. Owing to this the good-hearted Dikt always received a large share from Renzeli, which, added to his own, proved a meal as satisfactory as the boy had only dared to imagine in his dreams.

The strawberry season was over now, and Dikt was eager to help Renzeli sell other things, possibly blackberries. But his father thought this a poor plan, as no tourists wished to travel about with black hands and lips. Therefore, the child sat as before on the bench in front of the cottage with her mother. She never minded how heavy the stocking was or how

hard and thick the needles as long as she could sit all day in this companionship. Winding the heavy yarn around her tiny fingers, Renzeli smiled happily up at her mother. "Aren't you glad that I can be with you all day again, mother? Didn't you mind when I was away so much?" she asked, conscious of her mother's sad expression.

"Of course I minded it, Renzeli," said the mother. "What could make me more happy than to have you with me? But I can't help being worried about you, child. You see, I am very, very sick. I am trying hard to submit my will to God's, but it is hard for me. If only I didn't have to leave you behind alone!"

"Mother, can't I quickly fetch a doctor who may help you?" asked the frightened little girl, clinging closely to her mother.

"No, we can't do that, because it would cost too much money to have him come so far and I haven't the strength to go down to him. Besides, I know he couldn't help me. I have lost

all my strength, and it will never come back, I fear."

"Couldn't I sell something and get a lot of money for it, the way you did when I was ill?" the child asked.

"No, Renzeli," said the mother, "we have nothing whatever to sell, and besides, it wouldn't help us. Don't think about the doctor any more now. Pray to God to send us some help. He alone can do it."

But Renzeli kept on thinking about the doctor just the same and she wondered all day what they might sell in order to have him come up to help them. She herself owned nothing of any value, no, not a single shawl except the one she wore, which nobody would buy, it was so colorless and worn. But suddenly Renzeli had an inspiration. High up in their old wardrobe was something very beautiful and perhaps valuable. It was a little book her mother had once given her as a present. It had a beautiful picture in the front, a little angel crowned with a wreath of roses and who was stretching out his arms. Renzeli

put it happily into her pocket, eager to ask Dikt's advice about it that evening, for he was the one who always knew so well how to help her. They went inside as soon as it had grown cool, but Renzeli slipped outside again and as soon as Dikt appeared, she beckoned to him. The boy was surprised. He was sure Renzeli had a secret to tell him, something she had never done before. The child pulled out her book. "Look at the pretty book, Dikt! Do you think I could get enough money for it to fetch a doctor? How much do you think they would give me for it if I sold it to somebody in a carriage."

"Nothing," Dikt replied without any hesitation. "They have many books in their carriages with them, and much larger and thicker ones than yours. Some even have bright red bindings." As soon as Dikt saw what an impression his words had made on Renzeli, who had actually grown white from disappointment, he added soothingly, "I suppose there are other things you might sell. Why don't you gather little stones from the mountain

or wild cherries? But no, you couldn't find those. But you might find some flowers."

"What kind of flowers could I sell?" asked Renzeli, so sadly that Dikt felt smitten with pity.

"You needn't be so sad, I'll help you," he comforted. "Ox-eyed daisies and amaryllis are in bloom now, and along the brooks are marigold, and high up where we got the strawberries are whole bushes of centuary, which we call thousand-gulden flowers." *

"Thousand-gulden flowers!" cried Renzeli, opening her eyes so wide with surprise and joy that Dikt kept on wondering how much bigger they might become. "Can one pick as many of them as one likes?"

"Surely," said Dikt. "You can pull off whole bushes if you want to, and as many as you can carry. But do you know what they look like?" Renzeli shook her head. "Then I'll tell you," Dikt went on. "The leaves are as tiny as the wings of flies and the flowers are small and red. There are many flowers

* A gulden is about fifty cents.

on one stem and they are not bright red exactly, more like the red of an unripe cherry. They are lovely flowers, and nicer than any others. Now you know them, but try to be in Stans by eleven o'clock. The biggest coaches drive up then from the steamboat." Renzeli was very grateful to Dikt for his good advice. She was so glad she knew what to do now.

Emerenz woke up next morning at a very early hour, for somebody was lightly tapping her arm. Renzeli stood already dressed beside the bed, though it wasn't yet five o'clock and everybody in the cottage was still quiet. "I woke you up because I didn't want you to be worried about me, mother. I am going to pick some flowers and then you'll see what I'll bring you."

"Who will give you anything for flowers, my dear child?" said the mother, grasping Renzeli's hand. "Go and get the flowers if you like to, but don't be unhappy if you don't get anything for them. I don't expect anything. Don't be too late coming back, though."

Renzeli promised and set out happily, for

she knew it would take much less time to get flowers than to pick berries. Before long some light red blossoms were gleaming in the morning sunshine, which Renzeli at once recognized as what she was seeking. They sparkled in the light like no other flowers. She flew towards them, picked one stem after another with six or seven flowers on each, yes, ever more and more, for Dikt had told her she was allowed to take them. The child at last could not carry any more, her bunch was so wonderful and big. Renzeli ran down the mountain in great, joyous leaps. She got to Stans so early that not a trace of a carriage could be seen yet, but she sat down beside the roadside in order not to miss them when they suddenly should appear. But the bright morning must have lured out the travellers especially early that day, for a large coach with three horses passed her so suddenly that she hadn't even time to show her flowers. It halted before the inn, and Renzeli ran there at once. Four gentlemen sat in the carriage, three young ones and an old one with beautiful white hair. The

old man looked so kind that Renzeli would have loved to step up to him, but at once a large crowd of children had gathered about him, offering all sorts of articles for sale. More children came running to him from all sides, and Renzeli could see that all had happy faces. Whatever they offered the gentleman, stones, or blackberries, wild roses or snail-shells, he bought everything, turning over his purchases to the three young men. In return each child received a large silver-piece. The three young gentlemen laughed all the time and one of them remarked, "If you keep on that way, Baron, you'll soon have all the children of the neighborhood gathered around you."

"I must make some of them happy here," he replied, rejoicing over the gay crowd of little ones about him. "I enjoy doing it, for I was here years ago with my wife. She loved this region of the country and the people, too. Here, come and show me what you have." And with this the friendly gentleman had again given some coins to three or four youngsters. Renzeli saw all their faces beam with

joy, but so many more had gathered about the good man that there seemed no hope whatever for her to get through with her bunch of flowers. However, the way was quite clear on the other side, and Renzeli, walking around the carriage offered her flowers to the young gentleman who had not stopped laughing yet. He seized the bouquet and held it on high. "Glorious alpine flowers!" he cried out. "What do you want for them, little mountain fairy?" Renzeli gave her answer in a low voice, but he burst into such a gale of laughter that everybody turned to look at Renzeli, who stood there all abashed. The gentleman patted her shoulder kindly and said: "Now, now, don't get frightened! Take your flowers to the gentleman on the other side, for he wants to have them." Aloud he cried, "Those glorious blossoms are something for you, Baron, but ask the child what she wants for them. She has her price."

The old gentleman now noticed the little girl with the large bouquet of flowers, and as she stood timidly behind the others, he beckoned

to her. Renzeli came up to the carriage, as the others made way for her.

"Give me your flowers, child," said the old gentleman, taking them from her. "What do you want for them?"

"Thousand guldens," Renzeli said distinctly.

The young men simply shrieked with laughter.

"But, my dear child, you probably don't know the value of money," he continued kindly. "Why do you ask that sum?"

"Because they are called centuary, or thousand-gulden flowers," said Renzeli, gazing at the gentleman with deep conviction.

"She is right! It is true!" cried the young gentleman, laughing.

"But, dear child, you wouldn't even know what to do with all that money if I gave it to you," he went on.

"Oh, yes, I would know what to do with it."

"Then we'd like to know, too. Tell us!" cried the merry young traveller.

Renzeli gazed up at the old gentleman, and

seeing him nod, she answered: "My mother is very sick, and if I am to fetch the doctor, I must have a lot of money. He has to climb high up to see her, and if I have enough money, he might come a second time. Then mother might get really well."

The gentleman looked thoughtfully at the radiant eyes, which had never turned from his. At the sudden thought of what her mother had said about the doctor not helping her any more, her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"What is your name, dear child?" he asked, seizing the little girl's hand.

"Renzeli Jokai," was the answer.

"What! Is your name really Renzia Emerenzia Jokai?" the gentleman repeated rapidly.

"Yes, and it's my mother's name, too," affirmed the child.

"I thought I recognized those eyes." A moment after, the old gentleman leaped from the carriage. "Go on alone, gentlemen; I am not going with you any further! And you," he said, beckoning to the servant of the inn,

"see to it that my things are fetched out and a room is in readiness for me."

Dumb with astonishment, the young men gazed at their fellow-traveller and waved him a last farewell as he turned the corner with Renzeli. Then he began to climb the narrow trail uphill.

"Is your mother very ill?" was the gentleman's first question after they had climbed up a part of the path in silence.

"Yes, mother said so herself. But if I can fetch the doctor, she might get well again, don't you think she might?" the child asked confidingly, gazing in a supplicating manner at the kind gentleman, who held her hand like a father. Tears were again dimming the child's eyes.

"You mustn't cry, darling, I'll send your mother a good physician and everything may still turn out all right," he consoled his small companion. "Tell me who it was that wanted you to ask so much money for your flowers?"

"Nobody told me," replied the child, "but

Dikt said they were called thousand-gulden flowers."

"Really! Now you must tell me who Dikt is and how you came here with your mother, also where you used to live. In that way our walk will seem shorter to us," said the gentleman, gazing up at the long, steep slope before him with a slight feeling of hesitation. Then he proceeded with great determination. The child related the manifold experiences she had lived through with her mother and was able to describe the scenes so vividly that her companion listened, completely absorbed. They came up more quickly than he had thought and were quite close to the hut when Renzeli suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, mother, are you well already?"

Emerenzia, having recognized the gentleman who was leading her child by the hand, had run outside. With cheeks flushed a deep red from overpowering joy and agitation, she stood before him and cried over and over again, "Oh, Baron! Oh, Baron! Is it really you?"

Taking her hands, he pressed them most cordially.

"I am so glad to find you again, Emerenzia," he said kindly. "I have a last message and greeting for you from my wife."

"Oh," sobbed Emerenzia, "is my dear, kind mistress dead? Did she forgive me? Oh, Baron, and were you able to forgive me?"

"We won't mention it any more. Everything has long since been forgotten, only my wife felt great grief and anxiety about you. But you look so pale suddenly, Emerenzia, what is the matter?"

Leading Emerenzia to the bench, the Baron sat down beside her. "My wife had only the most friendly feelings towards you," he continued, "and in her last days she told me repeatedly to help you if I should ever hear from you and you should be in need. I promised to do so and the moment has come now when I can keep my promise. As the child told me, your husband is far away and you are all alone. Also you are sick and in need of

assistance. Tell me what you wish and I'll tell you what I propose to do."

At first Emerenzia was so deeply moved by the unexpected meeting that she could not speak. Then she began to tell her former master what she had lived through after leaving his delightful home. She described how her husband had thought it wise, after many unsuccessful attempts to better himself, to go far away, where he had probably perished, and how she had returned to her childhood's home when her strength had been exhausted. She wanted once more to beg the Baron's pardon for leaving her good home against his wishes when he interrupted: "Let us forget the unhappy past. You understand now why my wife and I didn't want you to meet the uncertain future you in truth experienced. Jokai was a very pleasant and talented person, but restless, always starting on something new. He would never have found peace upon this globe, and we must hope he has now found eternal rest. We must talk about the present first and what may be done. My plan is this: I

expect to come back here in eight or ten days after I have completed my Swiss travels. Meanwhile you can get ready and I'll take you with me to my present home. Your little one, whose acquaintance I have already made on my walk up, comes along too for the present. We'll see what is to be done for her later on. How my wife would have loved the child! In fact, it is hard to resist doing so."

Emerenz's tears began to flow down her cheeks faster and faster, but they were now tears of joy.

"God has sent you to me, Baron," she said in deep agitation. "I have begged Him night and day to open a way for my child to learn something by which she can earn her living when she will be left alone. And now you have come and are as kind as ever. I can go quietly to my death now, knowing that the child is in your hands."

But the Baron would not hear of this. Emerenzia must not leave him and her little daughter yet. He informed her that he was not travelling around as he used to do and

that he was living on an estate in a mild, healthy climate. She was to go there with the child and get well first. "You shall have complete rest there," concluded the Baron, "and then later you shall become the mainstay of my housekeeper, who is getting old and needs a helper. Later we'll talk over what is to be done with your daughter."

Emerenzia expressed her heart-felt gratitude, but said nothing more about herself. The Baron, who was waiting in Stans for the return of his brother, had to leave now. He wished Aloys to accompany him there, because a doctor must be brought at once and the patient's condition carefully examined. Emerenzia could hardly let go the hand of her benefactor and she thanked him often because she felt it to be the last opportunity she would have of doing so. But the Baron's heart was so happy at the future companionship with his old friend and the dear child that he answered all Emerenzia's words with a repeated, "Soon we'll meet again, Emerenzia, yes, we'll soon have a happy reunion."

Seeing the child, who had wondered at him in silent happiness, he turned to her: "I still owe you the thousand guldens, Renzeli. Don't worry, you shall get them." Then he proceeded down the mountain with Aloys.

Eight days later Emerenzia lay silently on her bed with folded hands, and Renzeli stood beside the bed weeping as if her heart were broken. Her uncle had told her that her mother would not wake up any more in this life, and when she was carried away, Renzeli pressed her face with choked sobs into the empty bed and would not leave the spot. When Aloys finally wanted to take her away, she begged and supplicated to be left there till she died, too. Aloys felt quite helpless and unwilling to make the girl still more unhappy, so he left her in the room alone. A few days later the Baron came up to the hut a second time, accompanied by two men carrying a sedan-chair. He supposed that Emerenzia would still be too weak to walk down the mountain side. When he heard from Seppe what

had happened, he was deeply grieved and after inquiring for Renzeli he heard that neither Aloys nor his wife knew what to do with her. Renzeli could not be induced to leave the mother's bedside and she had not eaten a mouthful or uttered a single word. When the Baron wished to be taken to the little girl, he found her kneeling on the floor, her face pressed into her mother's pillows.

He laid an affectionate hand on Renzeli's shoulder. "You still know me, child, don't you?" he asked gently.

Lifting her head, Renzeli looked at him, her eyes red with weeping. Then she nodded.

"I am glad," the Baron continued in the same gentle tone. "I have come to take you away, for I think you remember that I meant to get both you and your mother. We'll have to go alone now, darling. You know that I mean well, don't you, and I hope you will come with me willingly."

Renzeli had not forgotten what her mother had related to her about the Baron's and his

wife's great kindness, a kindness she had never experienced from any other human being. Getting up and stretching out her hand to the old gentleman, Renzeli whispered, "Yes."

"That's right," he said delighted. "We'll go at once, that will be the best."

With this he led the child out of the chamber and made her climb into the sedan-chair. Aunt Seppe said a short goodbye and promised to send her husband and the boys down to Stans next morning.

Renzeli was to say goodbye to her relatives, and the Baron wanted to tell Aloys what he proposed to do for his niece. To his great joy Aloys heard in the morning that the Baron was planning to turn the child over for the next few years to a lady who was the head of a girls' school, and Renzeli was to be educated in the lady's own house.

"If only the mother could have known this!" said Aloys, wiping his tears away and pressing the kind benefactor's hand. Dikt and Isi made big eyes when the Baron lifted Renzeli to the

seat beside him in the carriage. It was a carriage hitched to two horses, and looked exactly like the large carriages Renzeli had so long struggled to reach in order to sell the berries she had gathered with so much toil.

"Now they will not try to push Renzeli away!" exclaimed Dikt, delighted, as the carriage rolled down the mountain.

CHAPTER VI

IN A DISTANT GARDEN

Mild breezes rustled through the blooming magnolia trees in the lovely garden on Lago Maggiore. Dense garlands of gleaming roses hung down the high garden wall to the street, and the delightful perfume from the fragrant flower-beds filled the air far and wide. Brightly colored butterflies fluttered over the shimmering laurel-hedges, and settling down on the sunny flowers rose again high into the deep blue sky.

Leaning against a large magnolia tree stood a young girl, as yet half a child, who looked from the glowing flowers to the bright blue lake as it gleamed in the morning sunshine. Large tears were falling from the girl's eyes. At that moment a gentleman was strolling through the garden, apparently looking for somebody for he went first to the rose-bowers, then to the laurel-hedges and to several hidden

benches on the lawn. The friendly face of the old gentleman was surrounded by snow-white hair, but he carried himself erect and his step was light. He finally discovered the young girl, and stepping close to her, laid his hand on her shoulder. "Are you crying again, my little Renzia?" he asked affectionately. "Are you not happy here with me?"

Renzia quickly dried her tears. "Oh, I am, Baron," she assured him. "I never before saw anything so beautiful as this garden, and the country, too, about here, and the lovely lake. I feel so happy here," said the girl, at the same time unable to restrain her sobs, "I am so happy here that it hurts me, for I must always think about mother. If only she could have lived to enjoy this!"

"You mustn't call me 'Baron' any more. Say 'father' to me, darling," he replied. "You are my child, Renzia, and I'll be your father. Don't call me anything else from now on, please. Shall we walk through the garden for a while and be merry? You know yourself how badly I wanted to bring your mother here.

But God has taken her to Himself, and we must be resigned. Have you another sorrow, child? Do you lack anything else here?"

Renzia hesitated.

"Dear child," the Baron went on, "you know how much I enjoy giving you pleasure. Tell me frankly what makes you sad."

Renzia found it hard to keep back the rising tears. "I didn't dare to talk about it," she began timidly, "because I thought it couldn't be helped, father. When I was looking down over the wall today to admire the beautiful hanging flowers, a woman came down the street a little while ago. As soon as she saw me she stood still and lifted up her hands to beg. She was so pale and ill and reminded me of poor mother—"

Here Renzia broke into loud weeping. To give the girl time to compose herself the Baron said nothing.

After a while she continued, "I ran across the garden quickly and down the steps to the iron door in order to open it. I wanted to hear what ailed the poor woman, meaning to

give her something to eat. I am sure she was hungry. Just as I was going to open the door, the gardener came running and he said such harsh words that the woman ran away frightened. But she was so tired she wasn't able to get very far and sat down on the roadside. She looked back once more, and I felt so badly because I couldn't help her. The gardener said that no beggars were allowed to come to our iron door. Oh, I know the woman was terribly poor and sick besides, and she may have nobody to do anything for her. Oh, how terrible! It was just that way with mother." Renzia's voice was choked again with weeping.

"Come with me, child, come with me," said the Baron, gently drawing Renzia's arm through his. He led her away to a distant part of the garden, where vines hung across the trees, forming shady arbors.

Here the gardener, who was working on some plants, laid down his knife and came up to his master.

"I was looking for you, Joseph. I want to tell you something," said the Baron. "When-

ever my daughter wants to open the garden door in the future in order to talk to poor people going by, you must let her do it. Don't send anybody away, whoever it may be. Remember, Joseph!"

With Renzia on his arm the Baron came back to the flower-garden. "Are you satisfied now, darling? Will you be happy again, or have you any other wish?" he asked, while they strolled up and down together under the fine magnolias.

"I thank you a thousand times for your permission, father," said Renzia, looking much happier than before. "I have so many wonderful things to make me happy here that no wish—" Renzia suddenly paused with a blush.

"Then you still have some secret wish! Name it, Renzia, for I don't suppose it is anything which couldn't be fulfilled," the Baron urged her, smiling.

"I have wished for it several times since I came here," Renzia admitted slowly, "but it may not be right for me to say it."

When the Baron nodded, she continued:

"You see, father, I have so many beautiful things every day, and everything here is so delightful that I can't help thinking of my Uncle Aloys. I always wish I could send him a part of my riches, yes, and something to Dikt and Isi, and Aunt Seppe, too. They all have to work so hard and have so little pleasure."

"Why didn't you tell me that before, Renzia?" said the Baron kindly. "Come, we must go to find Mrs. Gertrude, for we need her help."

Going towards the open veranda which led to the large picture gallery on the ground floor, they found Mrs. Gertrude, the elderly housekeeper, going busily to and fro, shutting out the sunshine which was shining upon the old paintings.

"Sit down with us a moment, Mrs. Gertrude, we need your assistance," said the Baron, entering the veranda. When they were seated, he continued: "Renzia wants you to get some things for her and I want you to buy them and pack them up for us. Now tell us what your Uncle Aloys is to get, Renzia."

Renzia began timidly: "My uncle loves to go to church on Sunday morning, but he has only one good Sunday shirt, and long ago my aunt said it couldn't be mended any more."

"Good, Uncle Aloys shall have a dozen good shirts and a Sunday coat besides. What shall we send to Aunt, Renzia?"

A bright ray of joy had begun to shine in the girl's eyes. "Can my aunt have a big shawl, father? She always wanted one for winter."

"Of course! She shall have a good, large shawl, and I suppose she might find a Sunday dress quite useful," the Baron suggested. "What are the two young cousins to get? Do they also go to church on Sundays?"

Renzia nodded.

"Then they must get the same things as the father. And shouldn't we send them something to eat, too; something they might enjoy when they come home at night? What do you think, Renzia?"

Renzia had been wondering if she might make this suggestion, for she remembered how

pleased Dikt had always been when she had transferred some of her cornmeal to his plate.

Before she could even answer, the Baron added, "But it must be something substantial, Mrs. Gertrude. I think a long Milan sausage, or let us say two, with a fine big Milan cake would please them. You know the kind I mean, don't you, Mrs. Gertrude? Is that right, Renzia?"

Here the girl fell round the Baron's neck in overflowing joy and gratitude, and her eyes sparkled in a way he had never seen them do before.

"That is the way, my dear child. Now stay happy and don't shed any more tears," he went on, caressing her. "Go and write a letter to them all now while Mrs. Gertrude gets the things in town. Later we'll all meet again for a row on the lake."

Towards evening, when the Baron entered the veranda after coming back from a walk through the gardens, he asked, "Where is my daughter, Mrs. Gertrude?" He asked this every time he came back to the house.

"She is seeing off our packages at the garden wall," she answered. "You have no idea how pleased she was over everything we packed. I haven't seen the girl like that since she moved into her beautiful home three weeks ago. The costly presents she received herself did not produce a joy equal to what she showed today. I understand now why she wasn't contented in school, despite all the advantages she had, compared with many other pupils. Do you remember, Baron, that the only complaint made against her by the head of the school was that Renzia always wanted to give away the precious gifts you sent her to the poorer girls? I see and understand it now. Whenever she experiences something delightful, she at once thinks of those close to her who lack those things. Yes, they often don't have the sheer necessities and that spoils her own pleasure. The reason is that she has known dire want and destitution."

"All this must stop now," said the Baron in a lively manner, "and you shall help me,

Mrs. Gertrude. My daughter must forget the past and learn to enjoy her life."

But Mrs. Gertrude shook her head. "I have a different opinion, Baron," she said deliberately. "I think it did not hurt the young girl to have experienced want and suffering. Otherwise all the benefits she is reaping in this house might harm her more than help her. When young plants get only sunshine, with no rains and storms, they shoot into weeds instead of bearing fine fruit. No, Baron, we shall not try to wipe out anything God has planted in her young heart."

"If you think it best for my child, I suppose we must let her be. But," said the Baron in a supplicating tone, for his housekeeper was his confidential friend whom he never considered as a servant, "you must help me to turn the girl's thoughts and recollections away from her mother, Mrs. Gertrude. These memories make her forever sad and at every enjoyment she thinks and longs for her mother."

"I am afraid we should only succeed in making your daughter reserved towards us if

we did that," replied the lady. "She cannot help living in her thoughts, and deep, sorrowful experiences like hers cannot be wiped out. Only one thing can bring real joy into her heart and that is the conviction that the mother is really happy, yes, much happier than the child is herself. Also the assurance that her mother's short, sad life on earth now seems quite different to her in the world where her spirit is now."

The Baron was silent. Then he said, "I believe that you are right. See to it then that this consolation is active in my daughter's heart. What good does it do if I make her life beautiful and her heart is not able to enjoy it? Help me all you can, please, for Renzia sets great store by you."

"Only God can help her, Baron," replied Mrs. Gertrude, "and He alone can make sad hearts joyous. Of course I'll pray to Him to do it, and I'll do my share in giving her all the consolation and help I can. I firmly believe our young lady will be comforted at last. Be sure to allow her to do all the good she wants

to for those who are poor and in need. Nothing will make her heart joyous like good deeds, I know."

The Baron, nodding assent, went away to seek his daughter, for he could never be happy long without her.

Many a wanderer stands still outside the fragrant garden on the Lago Maggiore, where luxuriant roses hang in clusters over the wall, and all passersby refresh themselves in the wealth and beauty of the southern vegetation.

But much oftener still a bent little old woman creeps slowly along the garden wall. She is followed by a sick old man, while from the other side comes a sick woman with eyes red from weeping. She is bringing her frail children with her, and all stand still at the high, iron-grated door. Not long after a young girl with hair of palest gold stands at the open door and greets these poor people like a good friend. By that time a servant is approaching with a huge steaming soup-bowl, and the young girl fills all the plates full of

strengthening broth. She first hands it to the old, trembling woman, then to all the others down to the tiniest lad, who eagerly reaches out his hands for the gift. While the whole group is seated on the stone steps enjoying the delicious meal, the young lady's blue eyes shine with a surprising light. Some think tears make them look so bright, while others say, "No, her eyes gleam from a deep, inner joy."

This young, radiant creature is our "Fairy of Intra."

GAY LITTLE HERBLI

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CHAPTER I

HERBLI IS BORN

THE tiny hamlet of Highwater lies high up on the mountain ledge. When it gleams in the bright sunshine, it can be seen from the deep valley below. Lowwater, a little settlement of a few scattered cottages and not even a church of its own, lies halfway down the mountain. The inhabitants of Highwater have from time immemorial felt a deep contempt for those below them, because the whole water supply of Lowwater comes from their own heights. Should they stop up their streams every living creature below would perish from thirst. This made them feel very superior. Also the people in Highwater had decided ways and customs of their own, all of which had been preserved for many years. For instance, when a baby was born, the father always took the big Bible

from the shelf, and giving the mother a large pin, would lay the book on her bed. The mother would open it at random and stick the pin into the leaves. Then everybody would look where the last prick of the pin could be seen, and the name nearest to the little hole would be chosen for the baby's name.

Joshua, a very honest farmer, had just placed the Bible on his wife's bed. A little son had been born to him the day before, and the child's name was now to be settled. The woman energetically stuck the pin through the leaves and upon examination it was found that it had gone right through a man's name, which was Sanherib.

"That is a fine name," said the father, "but it sounds like the name of a great king or general."

"He may become great some day, one never knows," replied the woman with great confidence. "The chief thing is that he has arrived safely in this world. I'll call the boy Herbli."

And the name the woman had chosen stuck to the child for good and all.

Herbli's mother had a very sunny nature. Whenever she was peeling potatoes for their lunch she would accompany her task with a merry song, and Herbli, who sat before her on the table, beat the measure to it with his tiny feet. When Herbli grew bigger still, he would sit on the table when his mother was working, but his feet hung down from the table now. Neither did his mother sing all the time, for she had many things to tell Herbli. Once she said, "Herbli, always be sure not to look at the dark side of things. It's much better to turn your eyes towards the sunshine, and if there isn't any, then just think that it will shine again tomorrow." And another time it was, "Don't long for things other people have and you don't have, Herbli. Instead look at things you can be grateful for, things that are really yours. In that way you can always find something to make you glad." She also told him, "Never do anything wrong, Herbli. When you feel tempted to do some-

thing wicked, think at once that God is looking down on you just then and that He can see your temptation. If you don't fall, you needn't be afraid of anything or anybody, for you know that God is on your side. But if you do a wrong, you can't help getting frightened and you can't raise your eyes to Heaven as you used to do."

Joshua, the father, was a cautious man. He had pondered a long while before he could decide to marry and was at least fifty years old when he had at last made up his mind. That is why he was already on in years when his little boy sat on the table beating time to his mother's songs. When Herbli, who was seven years old, came home from his first day of school with an A B C book under his arm, his mother stood in the doorway looking at him with unhappy eyes. Seeing his mother sad for the first time in his life, Herbli was convinced that the reason for it was his having been obliged to sit still so long. This had proved very trying and hard to do. But his mother said, "Poor Herbli, you haven't any

father now." Joshua had been bedridden for quite a long while and had let no one near him except his wife.

Herbli, who had not seen his father for several months, did not realize what he had lost. He kept on living with his mother as heretofore, and for nearly three years no events spoiled their life. He was always happy to exchange the hated school-bench for the kitchen table, where, singing and talking, he still watched the pleasant activities of his mother. One day she said to him, "Herbli, we can't go on the way we are doing. I am able to do more work than I can find in Highwater. I must find some or we can't get through. Something must be done, but I don't quite know what. I have a brother who can advise me; we must write him a letter at once. Sit down, Herbli, and write what I dictate to you!"

The mother composed a letter to her brother, begging him to come and give her counsel. After Herbli had written it down with considerable trouble, there came the most difficult problem of all. The mother didn't know where

to send the letter. "Where does my uncle live?" asked Herbli. "Why not put uncle's name on the envelope and under it the village where he lives?"

"That's just it," said the mother, "he is everywhere and nowhere at once. Your uncle Friedel is a fiddler and a good one, too, and he is always wandering about from place to place. They want to hear him play everywhere, you see."

Herbli thought a while. "I know what to do," he said. "Couldn't we send the letter to a village where they want to hear him play and we can write under his name, 'Keep till he comes back.'"

That solved the difficulty and the mother chose the largest of the villages her brother frequented. The letter was sealed and addressed, and Herbli ran off to mail it at once. But he did not get far. After having reached the road by a leap over the hedge of their little garden he was accosted by a stranger with a big stick and a leather bag at his side. The man wore a small cap aslant on his head.

Catching hold of the boy, he asked, "How far are you going, my boy, and where?"

"To the post-box. I must see that this letter gets off, so uncle can come soon," explained Herbli.

"He is here already, my lad, and you needn't run across the fields now. Your uncle is coming back with you."

With this the wanderer led the amazed boy back through the garden into the house.

"It couldn't have turned out better," he called into the kitchen. "Make me a jelly omelet, please, the kind mother used to make us! Meanwhile I'll read your letter."

But the sister was full of joy and eager to greet the unexpected visitor at once.

"You have been sent to us straight from heaven, Friedel," cried the delighted sister, shaking her brother's hand.

"And I came into this world here in High-water the same way the day I was born. I suppose I keep it up," the brother retorted.

While Mrs. Rese went away to make her brother's favorite dish, Herbli followed his

uncle into the room and gave him the letter. When the uncle had laid his cap on the table he placed one end of his bag carefully on top of it as if he were putting down a little child. This made Herbli very curious, for he was sure the bag contained something which was alive. When the mother set the dish on the table, the uncle snatched up his bag like a hawk, and taking it into the next chamber, laid it cautiously on his sister's bed.

"I hope you made two, Rese," he said coming back. "I will not enjoy it if I have to eat by myself. You must sit down with me, for I believe I can easily finish this one alone."

"I knew that and made two," replied the sister, fetching in a second large omelet.

Uncle Friedel sat down and hugely enjoyed the meal. Whenever Herbli's plate was empty, he quickly filled it up, for he didn't like to see an empty plate.

When he had finished, he leaned back in his chair, and folding his hands together, began: "Let's talk now, Rese. I read your letter, and it is quite simple what you must

do. Of course Herbli must take up a profession. Why not mine, then, which is an excellent one, for the reason that it gives people pleasure? I'll take the boy with me and I'll teach him. Meanwhile you can go to Lowwater. When I went through there I heard that the Sergeant-major's wife has just been buried and people said to me, 'The poor man won't ever be able to get along with his crippled legs. What good are his savings to him?' You go to him, look after his house and nurse him, for you learned how to do that when Joshua was ill. As long as the old man lives, you can make an honest living, and later on, when it is necessary, we can talk over what is to be done further."

"Anything, Friedel, rather than go to Lowwater!" retorted the sister passionately. "You have heard what they say about Lowwater. Only people go there who have something to hide, and I'll not do it, for poor Joshua's sake. I don't want people ever to think that I have such a reason for going there. But you gave me a good idea just the same. Take my

boy with you and let him learn something, and I'll find some nursing to do. Joshua has often said that nursing sick people suits me, indeed he said to me several times, 'Oh, Rese, I feel better right away when you come in with your smiling face.' I hope Herbli will turn out a good, honest man, and I hope we'll all meet again before long."

"That is excellent; everything is settled," cried Friedel, satisfied. "Pack your things up, Herbli, for we must start now."

"No, no, don't be in such a hurry, Friedel," the sister said. "You shall spend the night here and start off tomorrow. It won't be very easy for me to give up my boy. However, we never lose many words over anything, as there is not much use in it. Give me a little time and I'll try to get used to the idea. Besides, I want to gather up the lad's things."

"That suits me just as well," said Friedel. "Come, Herbli, let's see now how this new profession will suit you."

With this the uncle went into the bedroom and brought out his leather bag. Herbli

opened his eyes wide when he saw a fiddle coming forth.

"Come here, Herbli," said the uncle, "and try to sing a song after me. I want to see what kind of ear you have."

After giving a few vigorous strokes with his bow, the uncle began to sing:

"Though winter has withered
The flowers and the leaves,
I still have some ivy
Whose green never grieves.

"And though my foot pains me,
My head is all right.
My seams may be torn,
But the buttons hold tight.

"So I climb up the mountains
And down again too;
If I haven't a stocking,
I've still got a shoe."

Herbli listened carefully to the first verse; then he cautiously sang the second and joined in heartily in the third.

"Good work, Herbli! You are a real Wellenberger. Yes, all our family are just born to

music. You have inherited that from your uncle," he said, delighted. "Watch my fingers now, but mark them well! Come, take the instrument in your hand and guide your bow up and down like that. Good! Once more, very good! I'll make a real musician out of you, my boy, and you shall be my successor. Come in, Rese!" Friedel called to his sister, who was busy in the kitchen. "Your boy will turn out a true fiddler, believe me, and a good one, too. He has our blood; he shows it by his hand and his sharp ear. Your Joshua was a good man, but there was no more music in him than in an old wardrobe. Now watch me put the fiddle back in the leather case, child! It protects the instrument, that's what it is for. A fiddle that gives forth such lovely sounds must be handled carefully."

The mother's great joy at the discovery that Herbli was suited so well for her brother's profession helped her a little over the pain of the coming separation, which ached in her heart, though she said nothing. In the evening

she made the best omelet she had ever made, and when she saw her brother and Herbli enjoying themselves, she also became merry and said to herself, "God watches over the fatherless, and if I put Herbli in His care, the boy will be taken good care of."

Early next day the uncle, his leather sack at his side, started off, followed by Herbli, who carried a knapsack on his back.

"Will I soon come back to mother?" asked the boy, who till now had only thought of the joys of the coming journey and not of the separation.

But his uncle, who could not bear the sight of tears, said quickly, "Be brave, Herbli! The quicker you learn your profession, the quicker you can come back to your mother. Remember that and be brave!"

Full of courage, Rese gazed into her son's eyes. "Don't forget any of the things I have told you, child, when you sat in front of me on the kitchen table. Remembering them will do a lot to bring us all together again," she

said. "May God protect you, dear boy, and do not forget your mother."

The two now set out. The morning sunlight gleamed brightly and the songs of birds accompanied them. Rese quickly returned to the house, packed her things together and that same day started off towards the hospital in the city.

CHAPTER II

HERBLI'S FIRST DAYS AS AN ARTIST

Herbli and his uncle travelled the best of that day on foot, first down the mountain side and then across the plain.

"When do we get to Lowwater, where they have things to hide?" asked Herbli, on whom the mother's words had made a deep impression.

"Lowwater lies on the other side of the mountain, far behind us already," said the uncle. "We are soon coming to a lake, where we are going to take a steamboat, after which we have to take a train to Basle. They like music there and understand it, too. I'll get some work there, I am sure."

"Is your home there?" inquired the boy.

"I am at home wherever the sun shines," replied the uncle.

Herbli did not quite comprehend the meaning of these words. "I want to know where you

live, uncle, where you sleep, where you keep your bureau with your things, and where you sit down to dinner the way we do at home?" asked the boy.

"I lie down wherever it pleases me and I carry all my property with me. I find a table spread for me wherever I happen to be, and in that way I am at home everywhere. You shall soon see how nice it is."

Herbli, however, could not understand this and was convinced they would finally come to his uncle's proper home. For the present he was to experience what the uncle had said about his table being always spread for him. After long, long wanderings the two at last reached the lake, where a large steamboat was just nearing the wharf. The uncle took the astonished boy by the hand and they boarded the steamer. Though Herbli was terribly tired and hungry, he could not sit still. He had never left the mountains before, and the wonderful things he now saw on the boat made him much excited. He ran to and fro to examine everything, and his uncle did the same. Instead of

looking at everything, however, the uncle shook somebody's hand every few moments, until it seemed as if all the passengers on the ship must be his friends.

Someone suddenly cried out, "Is it really you, Friedel? Oh, Friedel, Friedel! How glad I am to see you! Play us some music now!"

Then a well-uniformed waiter stepped up to the uncle politely and said, "The gentleman over there has asked after you before and is wondering if you will play. Do you wish to dine first?"

"Yes, and this boy is my assistant. He must dine, too," remarked the uncle, beckoning to his nephew.

"Is he going to play, too?" asked the polite waiter.

"Not today, but the next time," said the musician.

"He must dine with us, too. He must have some dinner with us," people cried from all sides. "Friedel plays for two."

Next Herbli saw to his great delight the ar-

rival of large, steaming dishes. After his many hours' march the splendid meal tasted superbly. When it was over, the uncle took out his violin and began to play. Herbli was enchanted, for he had never heard anything equal to his uncle's playing. How different it was from the way he had played at home!

Herbli stared at his uncle, spellbound, and his sparkling eyes got bigger every moment, while his fingers unconsciously imitated the motions his uncle made. When the latter made a little pause and put down his instrument, the boy took a deep breath and said, "Oh, uncle, teach me how to play that way, too!"

The uncle smiled. "We'll see to that by and by, but I am glad you know what sounds well." He was compelled to take up his violin again at once, for they wouldn't give him any peace. Some of his auditors stamped their feet with pleasure, others joined in the melody. All wanted to hear him play, and even when the landing place was reached and some of the passengers had begun to disembark, several of

the travellers still remained on the boat to hear the end of the last gay piece.

But now the uncle gave a few vigorous strokes, packed up his violin and left the boat. Herbli followed, gazing in mute veneration at the bag which had been able to bring forth such entrancing music.

When they entered the train, Herbli at once went to sleep and slumbered on till his uncle shook him firmly. Heavy with sleep, but led by the hand, the boy reached a narrow street with tall houses on both sides. Passing through a dark entrance, they came first into a long corridor, from which a door opened. Herbli could now look into a large room, where many tables were covered with glasses and bottles and plates of many kinds. The house was an inn.

A stout woman at the door stretched out her hand to the uncle. "Welcome, fiddler!" she exclaimed. "I am mighty glad you are back again. And with a boy, too. Where does he come from?"

The uncle shook the proffered hand. "I

didn't pick him up on the street, as you seem to think. He has good blood, for he is my sister's son," he continued, "but he belongs to me now."

"That is right," said the woman, greeting Herbli. "I suppose you will sleep with your nephew? Then we had better put a second bed into your chamber."

When this was settled, the two climbed upstairs at once in order to rest as soon as possible from the hardships of their journey.

"Come here, Herbli, for you must begin to learn to play," said the uncle early the following day.

Herbli wished for nothing better, for he had hardly been able to wait for an opportunity to use the bow again.

"Stand up in front of me," continued the uncle, seizing hold of the fiddle. "Follow carefully with your eyes the fingers of my left hand and the strokes of my right and listen to the sounds I make. I'll play you something easy first, so you can copy it."

The uncle had fetched out a second violin

and placed it in Herbli's arm, after having himself first played a melody on it to see if it was in tune. Herbli knew at once by its sound that this fiddle was not as fine as his uncle's, but he was delighted just the same to be allowed to hold the instrument. The uncle began to play a song:

"Though winter has withered
The flowers and the leaves—"

Watching the uncle's fingers intently, Herbli managed to strike the right notes so quickly that the uncle exclaimed after the boy's very first attempt, "You have an ear like a mouse, boy. You seem able to distinguish the finest tones at once. You are a real Wellenberger, my splendid fellow, and I'll make a real musician out of you. Then you'll be able to give many people pleasure. You shall just see what a fine life you'll have, you lucky lad!"

The delighted teacher continued to play the same melody over and over. Then a new piece was taken up, and the eager pupil followed, getting more enthusiastic the more perfect the playing of his violin became. This went on

hour after hour. The uncle did not grow weary for the lad got hold of the melodies easily and could play them correctly very soon. The teacher kept on repeating, "This is beyond my expectation, yes, beyond any expectation. You'll be a splendid violinist, Herbli, I can tell you that."

This continued for a whole week and part of a second, because the uncle was so absolutely carried away by Herbli's wonderful talent that he forgot his own activities completely. He did not go out once to play himself, as he had planned to do. One morning a bearded man happened to enter the room just as pupil and teacher were playing an entrancing dance tune with great enthusiasm.

"Hurrah! we can use him, too," exclaimed the stranger, patting Herbli on the shoulder. "You are going to be a real musician, boy, full of strength and fire. Wherever did you find him, Friedel? It seems to me that you are pretty lucky."

"I should think so! He's one of my own blood, do you understand? Yes, he has the

blood of the Wellenbergers," explained the uncle, proudly patting Herbli's other shoulder. "Such a one will find plenty of work."

"You are right," affirmed the other. "But first of all I want to ask you about our plans. Are you ready to leave? Remember we are to meet tomorrow and start right off."

The uncle clapped his hands together above his head. "Oh, I completely forgot. Yes, I forgot completely. Here, it is my pupil's fault," he exclaimed, "for he is such a wonder I could think of nothing else. He was born with the most accurate ear and the lightest and most delicate wrist. I prophesy I'll make a real violinist out of him. But it doesn't matter that I forgot about our trip. I am always ready to start off."

The friend was satisfied. He shook Herbli's hand, calling the boy "colleague," and went out, accompanied by the uncle. When the latter returned he said thoughtfully, "I have to think a bit what to do with you for the next six or eight weeks, Herbli. A few of my artist-friends and I long ago planned to take

a little trip together, but I had forgotten about it. Where shall I put you till I come back? Your mother is at the hospital and you can't go to her. Couldn't you go home again to some friends, or have you any?"

"Yes, yes, I guess I can stay with somebody at home," said Herbli, "but,"—and with this he cast a sad glance at his violin.

"You can take this one with you and play as much as you want to till I come back to this country, when I'll fetch you again," said the uncle. "You are not really much younger than I was when I first left my home with the fiddle under my arm and great joy in my heart, and did nothing but make music. I kept it up, you see, and I have never regretted it all my life, never!"

"I'll do the same," cried Herbli with sparkling eyes.

"You are too young for that though; I can't let you go out alone into the world just yet. Maybe a bit later," said the uncle, nodding to his nephew. "For the present I'll give you some money to travel home to the

mountains across the country and the lake. I suppose you'll find your way back to Highwater, for it isn't very long since we came from there together. What do you think, Herbli?"

Herbli was quite sure he could find his way. Enraptured at the prospect of taking his violin along, he was already holding it in his arm, drawing from it all sorts of sounds. Next morning early, the uncle with his leather sack at his side set out for the big cities in the plain, while his nephew, carrying his fiddle wrapped up in a cloth, started off in the direction of the mountains.

CHAPTER III

HERBLI MAKES A HALT

Herbli found the way his uncle had taken with him recently without any trouble. He had already reached the last mountain ridge and had left behind him most of the distance to be travelled by foot up the mountain. He now came on the narrow road to a little sign-post with two arms. One pointed further around the height, saying "To Lowwater" and the other up a steep incline leading to Highwater. Herbli well remembered coming down the latter with his uncle, but he also knew that a road led straight from Lowwater to Highwater, for he had often heard of people going down from the higher hamlet to the lower. Herbli, who had never been to Lowwater and remembering his mother's remark about it to the uncle, "Only people live in Lowwater who have something to hide," wondered very much how these people looked,

and being close to the hamlet now, he decided to go there first and climb the rest of the way from there.

But he was not as near to Lowwater as he had thought, and the road which skirted the mountain side went on endlessly. It had begun to grow dark, but still Herbli saw no village, only here and there a solitary cottage which looked down at him from the heights. Suddenly the path went downhill a little, as if it were leading back into the valley. Not much further, in a cup between the slopes, Herbli saw a little group of houses. A few more stood behind trees and some along the roadside. This must be Lowwater at last. The boy ran at once towards the first little wooden cottage along the road, which was brown from age and overhung by the gray branches of an old willow tree. Across from it stood a similar hut, blackened from age and so covered by ivy and bushes that its tiny window could hardly be seen through the dense green. A pleasantly fragrant smoke-wreath was just rising from the low chimney, and Herbli hesita-

ted. He suddenly felt how hungry he was, and the smell reminded him of a dish of peas and sausages his mother used to prepare for feast-days. He already had his hand on the wooden latch of the first cottage and the door was open. In the faint light he could distinguish an old woman standing before him in a narrow kitchen.

"Where have you come from, little boy? To whom do you want to go?" she asked kindly. "I don't think you have come to the right door."

"I want to get to Highwater," replied Herbli, "but it is dark already and I don't know the way there. Perhaps I can spend the night with you and go up tomorrow morning."

"Yes, my good little boy, but you see I have no bed for you," said the old woman, undecided. "But come in, for you can't go up through the woods alone at this time of night. To whom do you belong, and who expects you as late as this?" asked the old woman, taking the boy's hand and leading him into the room, which was so tiny that he stood beside the

stove immediately after his entrance. A wooden bench surrounded the room and a square table immediately in front of it nearly filled the rest of the space. "Sit down on the bench here, for there is room for us both, and now tell me about yourself," added the old woman, sitting down beside Herbli.

The boy had pondered meanwhile. He did not really know yet where he was going. He would have to seek a home in Highwater till his uncle could fetch him back. He couldn't very well arrive when everybody was asleep. "I don't quite know yet where I am going in Highwater," he said, "for mother isn't there any more. She is a nurse now in a hospital far away."

The woman gazed meditatively at her small guest. "You poor little boy," she said compassionately, "so you don't know to whom to go. That won't do in the night. Stay here and I'll fix you a place to sleep on the bench. You can find your way better in daylight. Aren't you hungry?"

"I am indeed. I spent my last money at

eleven o'clock today for a piece of bread and some cheese and now I am as hungry and thirsty as a wolf."

"Oh, dear, I wish I had more to give you!" said the old woman with a sigh. "I only have what was to be my breakfast tomorrow and an egg my little chicken lays for me every day; but I can easily get some more milk tomorrow."

She brought out a little pitcher with milk, took a piece of bread from a small cupboard and put a fine white egg into a brown cup. All these things she set before Herbli, who ate them with keen relish. Not waiting a moment he bit into the bread, putting a few soft pieces of it in his opened egg, and emptied his milk-jug without stopping once, for he was dreadfully thirsty. When his hunger was appeased, he got up from the bench and unwrapped his violin, which he had carefully placed beside him, as he had seen his uncle do.

"Can you make some music, boy?" asked the old woman, amazed.

"Yes, but not half as well as my uncle," said

Herbli. "You should hear him play! There is nothing more beautiful in the world. I'll go now and play before the houses here, for I want to get some money so I can buy you a breakfast for tomorrow. I have eaten all your breakfast."

"No, no, little boy, you mustn't do that," said the old woman. "I loved giving you what I had, and as long as I have strength to knit, I can earn my bread and milk. My chicken finds food outside and gives me an egg daily too. It is night now, and only poor people live near here. You would play your violin in vain, for they have very little themselves."

"They can't be poor over there and they could easily pay me something if I play some music at their supper," said Herbli, pointing to the cottage across the way.

"No, no, you mustn't go there," cried the old woman, frightened. "A man lives over there alone, and he isn't a good man, either. You mustn't go to him. Nobody goes there, for all the people are afraid of him."

"I am not a bit afraid of him," Herbli re-

plied, unabashed. "If I play him a song I am not doing anything bad. My mother said that we only have to be afraid if we do something wicked. Then we can't look people in the eyes."

"You have a good mother, little boy, but because she can't watch over you now, I'll do so. Come, sit down beside me and play me a little music. I love to hear it and it is a long while since I have heard any." With this the old woman drew Herbli down to the bench beside her. She was amazed to see how cleverly the boy's fingers skipped about the strings and lightly sought out the tunes.

"I want to go out tomorrow and I'll play for people till they give me some money. I must earn our breakfast and supper, for I don't like to eat up everything," Herbli suddenly declared in the middle of a tune. Then he took a few firm strokes and began to sing:

"Though winter has withered
The flowers and the leaves—"

to the very end.

"That is a merry little song," said the old woman when he had finished. "You can play very well, child. Do you know something else?"

"Yes, lots of beautiful tunes and some dance melodies. Shall I play one?" inquired Herbli.

"Can't you play me another song," the old woman interposed. "Some fine, serious song like those one sings in church?"

"No, I don't think so. But if you sing me one I'll be able to repeat it," said Herbli.

"Oh, dear, I can't imagine how it would sound if I sang a song with my old voice. But I'll try, for I'd love to hear my song played for me. And with trembling tones the old woman sang:

"O my soul, content thee
With what God has sent thee;
All He gives is good.
Let not restless grieving
Fret with its deceiving,
Take new hardihood!
Though thy need be great indeed
And misfortune sorely smite thee,
God will faithfully requite thee."

"Won't you sing another verse?" said Herbli when the woman paused. He did not take his eyes off her while she sang her song. She did not look gay like his mother, but she looked at him in a kindly way with her true, honest eyes. When she sang, her eyes grew so happy and joyful that Herbli was amazed. He gazed at the old woman's shining face and listened carefully to the words which she pronounced very distinctly and with an emphasis on every word.

"Sing another one," he repeated, and the old woman went on:

" Discontent and moiling
Can not ease thy toiling,
Useless is their goad.
When the burden vexes,
Troubles and perplexes,
Patience lifts the load.
Forth with care from out its lair!
Though the coming storm affright thee,
God will faithfully requite thee."

"Please sing one more," said Herbli reverently when she was silent once more. The

woman sang on, and with every word more strength came into her voice:

"On the foaming billow
Rainbow colors pillow
When the sun shines out.
Dark the hours of weeping,
Then the dawn-light peeping
Breaks the mist of doubt.
Bravely bear the sorrow's share!
Sorely though it now may blight thee,
God will faithfully requite thee."

"Now I know it," said Herbli, and began to play the melody so well and correctly that tears of joy rolled down the old woman's cheeks at the beautiful recollections the song had wakened in her. She sang the song over again, too, while Herbli played with great warmth and enthusiasm. The song was beautiful and the boy had been deeply touched. Suddenly he laid his fiddle aside, and looking at her with wide-open eyes, he questioned: "Is there something you, too, want to hide?" The old woman looked up astonished.

"What a strange question to ask me, little

boy! How did you think of such a thing?" she inquired.

"My mother said all the people in Lowwater have something to hide," replied Herbli. The woman held up her handkerchief to her eyes, for by her singing the past had begun to live in her again.

"I suppose your mother is right," she finally declared. "I didn't always live in this poor hut, yes, I have known better days. But if a child brings misery to her mother, all she can do is to hide her poverty and sorrow from other people. After all she can hold to God's love; He won't desert her entirely and will still show her better days."

Herbli's eyes also had filled with tears, for his heart was overflowing with pity for the poor old woman.

"Yes, and I'll try to do something for you some day to make you happy," he said to console her.

"Oh, you good, kind boy!" she replied, seizing the lad's hand. "You have a good heart and feel for a poor woman like me. That does

me as much good as if you were really helping me. You can't do that, because you are only a poor young boy yourself. But I have grown fond of you, and it will make me happy to have you here for the night. Come, I'll make you a bed on the bench now."

The woman brought out a pillow and a coverlet from the adjoining chamber and after folding the cover double on top of the bench she laid the pillow at the head. "You must lie on the cover, so the bench won't be so hard for you," she said. "Then you can lay your head on the pillow and I hope you don't need a cover over you, for I haven't any left. But it isn't cold tonight."

"No, no, this is very nice," replied Herbli, suddenly grown conscious of the many miles he had walked that day. As soon as he had lain down, the woman cautiously moved the table close to the bench, in order to keep the lad from falling off during his sleep. "Goodnight," Herbli muttered indistinctly. "What shall I call you?"

"Just call me grandmother," answered the old woman.

"Grandmother," the boy slowly repeated, and the next instant he was sound asleep. The old woman entered the little room adjoining and softly closed the door. But soon after she returned, bringing with her a blanket folded four times together, which she tenderly laid over the sleeping child. "He might get cold in the night," she muttered to herself, still gazing at the smiling face of the little stranger, who already had as sure a place in her heart as if he were her own. Then she went away. She paid no attention to the fact that she herself had no coverlet or pillow and had to use a thin sheet as her only covering. The little boy at least was well looked after.

CHAPTER IV

A SECOND ACQUAINTANCE IN LOWWATER

NEXT morning at an even earlier hour than the old woman usually got up, she came into the outer room, for she had been cold under her thin cover all night and had been glad to rise. She stepped up to the bench and saw Herbli still lying in the identical position in which he had fallen asleep. His cheeks were red, for he had been comfortable and warm under his blanket. While the old woman bent down and gazed at him affectionately, Herbli, also accustomed to early rising, suddenly opened his eyes. "Good-morning, grandmother," he said, jumping up.

"Good-morning, little boy," she replied. "Did you sleep well on your narrow bench?"

"Yes, I think so, for I know nothing from the time I said good-night, grandmother," Herbli said.

"Then you must have slept well," the old

woman exclaimed, relieved. "But I suppose you are still tired after your journey, and you can stay here a little longer if you want to. Meanwhile I'll go and fetch some milk and bread for our breakfast."

"I'll do that, grandmother," cried Herbli, leaping down from the bench. Seizing his violin he ran outside.

The sun had just risen and dew-drops shimmered on all the grasses. Birds whistled in the tree-tops and flitted merrily to and fro. The morning air filled Herbli's limbs with delight, and at a bound he flew to the dark brown cottage across the way. The door was ajar, a sign that the inmates were awake. Giving the door a slight push and taking up his fiddle, he vigorously began to play and sing:

"Though winter has withered
The flowers and the leaves,
I still have some ivy
Whose green never grieves.

"And though my foot pains me,
My head is all right.
My seams may be torn
But the buttons hold tight.

"So I climb up the mountains
And down again too;
If I haven't a stocking
I've still got a shoe."

Several times angry cries had issued from the room, trying hard to stop the singer; not succeeding at all, however. Herbli in his merry enthusiasm succeeded in making louder sounds than the other. He ceased at last, though, when frightful shouts were mingled with his melody. "You rascal! You ruffian! You vagabond! Stop that noise and go away!"

Herbli, anxious to see who was acting in such a fashion while music was being played, opened the door. It was dark inside, for the two small windows were overhung with green. On a bed in the corner sat an old man whose eyes sparkled with rage. A gray, shaggy beard covered half his face and gray knots of hair fell down over his forehead, making him look like a savage. Herbli at once had the impression that the man was not able to move about very fast, otherwise he would not have raged so much with his words.

"But I don't do you any harm," said Herbli. "You can see that I sing what is true, and I'll finish it for you, now." Herbli was so filled with enthusiasm for his song that he kept on in spite of the man's furious imprecations:

"And if some curmudgeon
Should bid me go pack,
'I'm better off than you are,'
I'll answer him back."

When the boy had finished, he took his violin and bow beneath his arm, ready to leave.

"Come in here, come in to me!" commanded the old man.

Herbli obeyed.

"How do you know you are better off than I am?" the man accosted him harshly.

"Because you were so cross while I made music for you, and I get happier when I sing. That is the reason," replied Herbli.

The old man examined Herbli with a penetrating glance. "Where do you come from?" he asked harshly.

"I have been quite far away, but when my uncle comes back we may go even further,"

explained the lad, looking at the man with wide-open eyes, completely unafraid.

"Where are your father and mother?" the other wanted to know.

"My father is dead and my mother is a hospital nurse in town. But I must go now," Herbli added at the sudden recollection that he had planned to earn a breakfast for the grandmother and himself by playing on his fiddle.

"Stay here," the man commanded, and Herbli noticed at once that his voice was not so angry as before.

"What must I do?" asked the boy, nearing the bed of his own accord, picking up one crutch and putting it beside the other. Then he quickly withdrew again.

"I won't hurt you," said the man, who had observed the boy's motions. "You needn't run away from me. When does your uncle come back to fetch you?"

"In six or eight weeks, or maybe ten," said Herbli.

"That's what I thought. Or in twelve, or

not at all," the man added. "I guess he is a musician like you and has taken a trip without knowing when he will get back."

Herbli was surprised that the man had guessed all about his uncle.

"Yes, look at me all you want!" continued the man. "I can predict other things, too, that nobody has told you before, either. I tell you what! Stay with me till your uncle comes back! You will like it here. You'll be comfortable, and I'll let you play your fiddle all you like. I need somebody to fetch me things, for I can't walk any more. Listen! I don't need much, but I can't starve to death, either. You can do something for an old man. Please stay with me!"

As soon as anybody talked to Herbli in a friendly fashion the boy was won over. The man had really spoken the last words pleasantly. "Yes, then I'll stay," Herbli said, quite relieved that he had found a place to live for the present and glad to assist the lame man. "But I must go and play on my fiddle first

till I have earned enough to get a breakfast for me and the woman."

"What? What do you mean?" the man said in quite a passion. "Didn't you say you were alone?"

Herbli, after telling his experiences of the previous night, went towards the door.

"Stay here! You must never go near that woman any more! I don't want to hear about her. Come back!" he yelled, infuriated.

"No, then I must go and I'll never come back. I have to go to the grandmother and I want to see her every day," said Herbli firmly, already outside.

The old man began to threaten with his fist, now. "Come back, will you, do you see?"

But Herbli continued to go, undeterred.

"Come back just the same, then! I'll take good care of you," cried the man with a transformed voice. "Come, and I'll give you the money for your breakfast! Come, here it is!" The man dug for something under his cover, and holding it out to the lad, said, "Come here!"

"But you must give it to me for fiddling and not as if I were a beggar, for I'm not," said Herbli, gradually coming nearer. Then he looked at what the man was offering him. "That isn't enough; I'll add it up for you." And Herbli began to count on his fingers: "Milk and bread for me last night makes one meal, milk and bread for me today makes two, and the milk and bread for today's breakfast for grandmother makes three meals. That will cost twice as much as you are giving me."

"I haven't any more than that. I am a poor man and I tell you it is enough. Must I, a poor sick man, starve then? I have to keep a little for myself," he whimpered.

"No, no, just keep it," said Herbli compassionately. "I can get what I need from other people. Just take it back and let me go."

The old man had seized Herbli's arm, holding him fast. "Wait a little! Here!" he said, opening his fist a little and trying to press another little coin into the boy's hand. "There, take it, take it!"

But Herbli would not open his hand. "No,

I won't take it," he said, holding his hand closed behind his back. "Keep it, if you need it yourself. I need three such coins for three times milk and bread. The little that will be left over grandmother must have for my thanks. Then she'll have enough for supper tonight."

"Why do you think so much of that woman?" growled the man once more, opening his tight grasp. Another little coin came forth. "Here you have it," he said, drawing Herbli's hand to himself and forcing in the coins. "You can go now, but promise to come back, will you? I hope you won't let me lie here all alone."

Herbli was once more touched with pity. "No, no, I'll come back," he assured the sick man, "when one makes a promise one must keep it."

"And when the woman talks to you, don't listen to her. She lies, I tell you, she just invents everything she says," cried the man in agitation.

"No, she doesn't do that or she couldn't sing

such lovely songs. She couldn't enjoy thinking about God so much, either, and she couldn't look up to heaven so happily," said Herbli, convinced. "One can't do that when one does wrong. I know that from my mother."

"I am glad you know that. Would you never keep money that doesn't belong to you? Do you know it is wrong to do it?" the old man asked with a searching gaze.

"No, I wouldn't do it," answered Herbli with such honest, open eyes that the old man nodded, satisfied.

"Go now and come back soon!"

Herbli was outside at last. From one of the more distant cottages rose a thick column of smoke which attracted him. Somebody must be baking there. Sure enough, it was the baker's house, for he saw large loaves of bread heaped up behind the window.

"How much is one big loaf like that?" Herbli asked the woman who stood at the window.

"Two pennies," was the answer.

Herbli calculated. "If I pay that I have a

penny left over for milk." Aloud he asked: "How much milk do I get for a penny?"

"For how many is it to be?" inquired the woman.

"For two."

"It will be enough for your breakfast and supper and some will be left over even then," laughed the woman. "Do you want to buy milk from me? I can give it to you right away, but be sure to bring me back the bottle. There, do you want the bread, too? Can you pay?"

"Of course," said Herbli, putting the coins beside each other on the table, so they could be seen clearly. Then putting the fragrant loaf of fresh bread under one arm and the fiddle under the other, he started off, carrying the milk bottle in one hand. He ran towards the grandmother's cottage as fast as his load would let him, and she ran out to meet him, for she had seen him coming in the distance.

"Oh, I am so thankful you are here again and that nothing bad has happened. I was so frightened," she called to him. "I saw you go to the old man's house over there and you

didn't come out for such a long while! I couldn't go over, because he wouldn't have let me in. Give me something to carry too, boy, you can't take all. But how did you get all these good things?"

They had entered the little room and Herbli, after putting the bread and the milk on the table, sat down on the bench.

"We must eat, grandmother. Oh, the bread smells so good," he said expectantly. "But we need a large knife to cut it."

The grandmother, tripping to and fro busily, brought a knife and cups and set down her little pot of coffee which had stood waiting on the stove till the lad's return. Breakfast now began. Herbli found it delicious beyond his expectation and ate one piece of bread after another, drinking the fresh milk with great enjoyment. The grandmother said repeatedly that she hadn't eaten such good bread for years. Herbli must tell now how he had managed to provide such a fine breakfast. After swallowing the last mouthful and finishing up with a last sip of milk, he related every-

thing and also his intention of going over to the old man at once in order to stay there. But the grandmother wouldn't hear of that.

"No, no, don't do that! That might be your ruin, boy," she lamented. "You mustn't do that; no, no, you mustn't do it."

"But I have to, grandmother, because I promised, and one must keep one's promise," said Herbli. "He can't hurt me when he is angry, for he can't get up quickly. You see, I can run away, if he doesn't keep his word. But he said he wouldn't hurt me and he needs me. He can't fetch anything for himself and he might starve to death."

"Oh, you good little boy! Even if he doesn't beat you, he can harm you in other ways," the grandmother lamented. "He might teach you wicked things, for no one knows what he might do."

"Why do you think he might do something bad? Has he done something bad already?" asked Herbli, whom the grandmother's lamentations had made thoughtful.

"I'll tell you what I know about him, be-

cause I don't want you to go to him," sighed the old woman. "You see, when we both were young, we lived in the same small town in the valley. We were both prosperous and lived nearly as close to each other as we do here. He was a tradesman and had a good business. He drew many young people to his shop and entertained them with games and various amusements. All liked to give him their money to invest, because he said he would do well for them. My young son was one of them. His father was dead, and I knew little of such things. Suddenly the rumor spread that his business was going badly and all who had money in it would lose it all. It was true, and I became absolutely destitute. Everything we owned was invested in his trade. Of course he was accused of not having been honest in his business, but he was able to prove that he himself had nothing left, at least nothing in our country. Soon after he said he would not remain any longer in a place where he had been wrongly accused, and he went away, nobody knew where. The saddest thing about

it was that my son did not seem so clear about his future any more. He decided to become a tradesman and become rich that way. But he only grew poorer all the time and finally went to a foreign land and died there. I moved here because I could get this small hut for very little money. When I stepped out of my door the first day of my stay here, the man I wished never to see again came out of that house opposite. He was to be my nearest neighbor. His glance told me clearly, too, how much he disliked seeing me. But perhaps we have still to learn something from each other! That may be the reason we have to live so near to each other now. You don't know how I dislike your going to him, for a little boy like you might lose his character with him. But as long as you have promised, you must go. Be sure to think a lot about your mother and all the good she taught you."

"Yes, yes, I'll do that," Herbli promised, "and I'll come over to you again, too, as soon as I have time, grandmother. When I am big, I'll be your son, because you have lost yours."

"Oh, you kind, dear boy! By then you'll have forgotten the old woman, believe me!" But she had to wipe a tear away just the same. "I'll be satisfied as long as you are happy over there and come to no harm. Only I feel as if I were giving up my own child."

Again the old woman had to wipe away a tear. But Herbli shook her hand vigorously and departed.

CHAPTER V

HERBLI TURNS NURSE

"I AM very glad you came," the old man exclaimed, as soon as Herbli opened the door. "I thought already you were one of those who think only of themselves and do not care about an old man's troubles."

"But I promised to come back," declared Herbli, as if he couldn't possibly have acted otherwise.

"Of course you promised, that is true," assented the old man. "I must tell you now what I expect you to do for me—just necessary things I can't do for myself. I am a weak old man who needs strengthening food. If I don't get it, quacks and doctors will get hold of me, and all they care about is to rob one. You must go right away and bring me something. There, take that small bag from the wall. When it's full, carry it on your back; do you understand? Should somebody on the way ask

you what you are carrying, just go your way and give no answer."

"Why not, why shouldn't they know?" said Herbli guilelessly.

"Under no conditions tell them, for I don't want you to," the old man cried excitedly. "There are many wicked people who grudge anything good to others and speak ill of anybody who is able to buy himself a little something. Do you hear? And if they should ask you in a shop where you come from, just say you come from the mountains and not a word more! There are many wicked people, and I know! Now listen well while I tell you where to get all the things I want, for you have to go quite a distance." He then carefully described a steep path which led through many woods and thickets to the bottom of the mountain and a bit further to a hamlet. Herbli was also instructed where to get the meat, and wine, sausages, white bread and fresh peas the old man wanted. When the old man had explained how much each article was to cost, he pressed a crushed piece of paper into the boy's hand.

"I give you exactly the amount you need," he added. "But if things happen to cost less than I thought, you must tell me about it."

"Of course I will; why shouldn't I?" replied the lad innocently. "Goodbye now. What must I call you?"

"You can call me Mr. Kasper," was the answer.

Herbli left with his sack, whistling merrily. He found the road quite easily, as well as the butcher, wine and baker shop, without having to ask a single question, for Mr. Kasper had explained everything minutely. However, more than three hours elapsed before the boy came back, for the hamlet to which he was sent lay on the side of the mountain opposite to Lowwater, and it was a long distance away.

"You get back the minute I expected you," said Mr. Kasper delightedly as soon as Herbli opened the door. "You didn't chat much on the road."

"I didn't say a word to anybody," replied Herbli. "If the bag hadn't been so heavy, I could have run faster."

"I knew that," said Mr. Kasper. "I suppose you don't know how to cook." When Herbli confirmed this the old man continued, "Come and help me get out of bed then! You'll have to watch me closely, for you may have to do the cooking yourself soon, I am getting so weak."

Herbli found it quite troublesome to lead Mr. Kasper as far as the stove, for the old man leaned so heavily on his shoulder that the boy thought he would collapse. However, by gathering all his strength together the old man succeeded in standing upright. The meat, sausages and peas were thrown into the pot which hung over the fire, and Herbli had to bring water three times before there was enough in the kettle, for Mr. Kasper said again and again, "That isn't enough yet; go and get some more." Soon a very pleasant odor rose from the kettle, which crackled and hissed so violently that Herbli looked forward to the meal.

Mr. Kasper kept on stirring the fire so that it shouldn't go out, reminding the boy from time to time to watch how this was done.

It took a long while to cook, so Mr. Kasper bade Herbli move the table close, set bread and wine on it, and have plates and spoons all ready. Everything was done, and still the old man stirred the stew about in the kettle, asking the boy to pay attention.

At last when Herbli could hardly sit still any longer for hunger and impatience, Mr. Kasper seized the large ladle and filled both plates to the very rim. "Now it is cooked as it ought to be. Remember that good things take their time," he said, cutting large pieces from the white bread and pushing one over to the boy.

The water was all cooked away, and the peas, meat and sausages were all very soft and delicious. Herbli had never tasted anything so strengthening. He ate heartily, and Mr. Kasper filled his plate once more. "Can you also drink wine?" he asked the boy now.

"No, mother only gave me milk and sweet cider," replied Herbli.

"That is right; wine is for old people," said Mr. Kasper, emptying his glass of dark red wine. Then he poured out the rest of the bottle.

"Shall I put the other on the table?" inquired Herbli innocently, when he saw that nothing was left in the bottle.

"No, I'll take it later to make me sleep better," replied the old man. "You see, one needs these things when one is weak and old." Herbli led him back to bed and he lay down. The day was nearly done.

"We were too late starting today, and it is harder to sleep when we have our dinner late. Tomorrow morning you shall go down early and we'll have our meal in the middle of the day. In the evening one doesn't need so much," said Mr. Kasper. "You will find a bed in there, for I had a boy with me before and he had a good life, too; but when I found that he was dishonest I drove him away. I know right away when a person is dishonest, do you hear? And I can't have such people with me. Leave the door open so I can call you in the night if I can't sleep. I couldn't stand being alone."

"I'll come to you if you want me," Herbli

promised compassionately. There wasn't any bed in his chamber, but a mattress and some bedding lay on the floor. The boy lay down and went to sleep so promptly that the old man outside envied him. "Oh dear, I wish I could do that, too," he muttered, listening to the even breathing. In his dreams Herbli saw his uncle standing beside the window, playing a new melody. He was listening most intently in order to catch it, but it seemed to escape him all the time, and he cried to the uncle, "Please play louder, play louder!" and the uncle called back furiously, "Come out at once! Can't you hear?" When Herbli listened again, half awake, to see if the uncle was calling, he heard a loud voice from the next room: "Why don't you come? Can't you hear me?" It was Mr. Kasper's voice, and Herbli suddenly realized where he was. He jumped up from his couch and ran to the other room. The old man was sitting up in bed uttering loud and violent imprecations concerning the deaf boy and all the world in general. Herbli was so heavy with sleep that he didn't

understand the oaths, and as soon as he sat down on a chair he was nearly asleep once more.

"Take your violin and play me a piece!" commanded Mr. Kasper. "But make it something loud and cheerful so I can imagine that I am in the midst of jollity."

Herbli obeyed and at once began to play a dance tune, for the first stroke of his fiddle had thoroughly roused him. He played all the tunes and merry songs he knew, one after the other without ceasing, and when he glanced at the bed after a while, he saw the old man's head resting on the pillow. He had fallen asleep. The lad slipped over to his room and immediately dropped to sleep as soundly as before.

Early the next morning Herbli went down to the valley to bring many new things for Mr. Kasper, who loved variety in his diet.

When the nourishing meal was cooked and eaten and Mr. Kasper had emptied his large bottle of wine, he said, "Play me some music, for it makes me go to sleep easily. I must

sleep or I'll lose all my strength. But promise not to run away while I'm asleep, for I like to know where you are. You must sit beside me, for I don't want to be alone when I wake up. I am alone long enough all morning without you. Promise not to forsake a poor, lame man," he begged.

Herbli would promise anything when his compassion was aroused and he gave his promise to remain, despite his intention of going over to the grandmother. This went on for several days, and the following weeks went by so fast that the young caretaker was quite surprised when the leaves began to get yellow and autumn had come. But his uncle had not returned.

A wonderful life had begun for Herbli lately and a new interest filled the boy's mind so utterly that he even forgot his uncle. He had discovered that he was able to make up new melodies for himself. It happened this way: One night when the boy had played all his old tunes over and over again, the old man said, "Can't you think of something new? I

am tired of these. If you try, you may be able to think of other tunes, boy." On his walk Herbli had deeply pondered how a new tune might sound, and when he came home, he went to his own little room and tried out in low tones what he had invented on his way. When he played it to the old man that night he was sly enough not to say a word about composing it himself, for he thought Mr. Kasper would only say, "How can a young boy invent a really good melody?"

But when Herbli had finished playing it, Mr. Kasper said, "That was something new, one I never heard before. You see, if one thinks hard one can always remember others. That one sounded half like a hymn and yet gay and bright. Think some more, for you must know several others."

These words greatly encouraged the lad, for it was quite clear that Mr. Kasper knew something about these matters. Herbli, who had remembered the grandmother's song, had set it to a merry rhythm. From that time on the small musician was completely lost in melodies

when he took his long tramps, and strangely enough the more he put together, the more seemed to come to him. The tunes he heard running in his head made him so eager to try them out on his violin that he hastened his steps more every day and so would come home a little earlier. Mr. Kasper, who was only too glad to see him back, could not help being surprised. One day, despite the heavy load the boy had been obliged to carry, he came home especially early, and that night he appeared beside the old man's bed at the very first call. Mr. Kasper said delightedly, "You get more quick and prompt every day and you suit me very well. We must stay together as long as we live. I want to settle that. You stay here with me, and I'll take care of you, for I don't think that your uncle will come, probably not for several years. I know what it means when musicians go travelling. I feel my strength coming back since I get my meals so regularly, and when I can walk a little better, I'll try to give you a good time, too. Just wait and see! I'll take you to a place where everybody is

merry and they play the harp and violin, and you can learn new tunes there. Just promise me to stay here, promise it with your hand."

"Yes, I promise to stay till uncle comes back, but I don't know what he wants to do with me then," Herbli said, laying his hand in the knotty fist of the old man.

"That will do," the other said. "And because you have promised to stay with me, I'll promise you something, too. In case I should have to go away, you know, in case I shouldn't live, everything I have under my head belongs to you. Of course this won't be for a long while yet, because I feel much stronger than I have been for a long while. But the fellows who were after all my things shall not have a single rag from me. Give me a piece of paper and I'll write it all down so they can read it, and I'll tell the parson. Play me something now to celebrate our bargain. Yes, we shall have many more happy days together."

Herbli had to play one tune after another, because the old man seemed unable to go to

sleep. Suddenly he fell back on his pillow with a deep groan, and when Herbli came close to ask him if something hurt him, he gave no answer. When the groans had ceased, Herbli thought that Mr. Kasper would call in case he should want more music. For the present the boy was sure he wanted to be left in peace. He therefore went to his own couch and slept soundly till morning.

At the accustomed hour he approached Mr. Kasper's bed in order to receive his orders. The old man did not answer. Herbli stepped still closer in order to ask again. He began to be anxious. He had never seen the old man look like that before, his wide-open eyes all staring. Herbli ran out and over to the grandmother. She received him with great delight. "Oh, my dear boy, dear little boy," she cried, "have you come back at last and has no harm come to you?"

"No, no, I am all right," replied Herbli. "How could I have been harmed?"

"Your guardian angel has looked after you, my boy, I am quite sure. I suppose you are

going away from him now to your mother. Have you come to say goodbye to me," inquired the woman.

"No, I only came to fetch you, grandmother," said Herbli, seizing hold of her hand. "Come with me, please, for Mr. Kasper looks so queer. He doesn't talk, and his eyes are so wide open, and he is lying there so stiff and quiet."

"He must be having a fit. Run quickly, run to the doctor," said the old woman, scared. "But I mustn't come over with you, for in case he should wake up and see me in his room, he'd get terribly angry and that mustn't be. Get the doctor as quickly as you can. Oh dear, I don't suppose you know where to get him. Come, I'd better go with you. There is one in the hamlet below. Oh, if only I could run faster!"

"Oh, I know, I know!" cried Herbli, already setting out, for on his daily walks he had seen a brass plate with the name, "Doctor Gutmann," written on it.

Never had he come down to the valley as

fast as that day. The doctor was at home, and Herbli described Mr. Kasper's condition. He begged the doctor to come right with him because his neighbor had said it was very serious. After packing a few things together the two began their climb.

Mr. Kasper was lying exactly as Herbli had left him. The doctor seized the drooping hand. "The man is dead," he declared; "he died from a stroke. Go to the parson and tell him about it. There is nothing more for me to do."

The doctor left, and before setting out to seek the parson, Herbli went to the grandmother to tell her what had happened. Also she would be able to direct him to the parson. Herbli couldn't comprehend what had occurred, but thought that the sick man might come to life again if the clergyman came soon. The grandmother was waiting for him at the door. When she heard the doctor's words, she clapped her hands together and lamented, "Oh, if only he remembered that the end comes for everybody! Oh, I hope he did."

"Yes, grandmother, he did," Herbli com-

forted her. "He told me that I could have what he has under his head if he died. They are two large pillows."

"You talk like a boy who doesn't understand," she said. "But it is a comfort to know that he thought of his coming end. If only he thought about it in the right way and begged for mercy!"

"I must go at once and fetch Mr. Parson," Herbli cut short the old woman's laments.

"But we have no church or parson in Lowwater," she informed the boy. "Part of the houses belong to the hamlet you have just come from and the upper ones adjoin the parish of Highwater. But because both places are so far away, hardly anybody from here ever goes to church. That's why the people in Lowwater are so despised."

"Then I'll run quickly to Highwater," said Herbli with joy, "for I know our Mr. Parson well. He is our own clergyman."

The grandmother now pointed out the road he had to take, for the boy had never gone that way before. As soon as he reached High-

water he had no trouble in finding the parsonage, which he knew of old.

The clergyman was standing at a pear-trellis in his sunny garden, and when Herbli came near, he at once gave the boy his hand. "I was just thinking about you, Herbli," he exclaimed, "for I received a letter from your uncle this morning in which he says that his journey will take at least till mid-winter. He asks me to find you a good home, and as I didn't even know where you were, I hoped you would soon turn up."

When Herbli related his recent experiences, the parson was amazed. To Herbli's request to come down with him he said reluctantly that there were probably relatives who had to be notified of the man's death. After inquiring the old man's name, he shook his head, for he had never heard it in his life.

"Grandmother knows him," Herbli added. "Mr. Kasper said he had a paper to give you, where he had written down that I was to have the two pillows under his head. I want to

give them to grandmother, because she gave me half her things when I slept with her."

The parson took up his hat. "I'll come with you," he said, starting out at once in Herbli's company. When they came to Lowwater, he requested to be taken to the grandmother, who could give him information about Mr. Kasper. He did not know the old woman either, but as soon as she mentioned the man's full name, the parson at once knew who he was. Kasper had been only his Christian and not his family name. The clergyman went with Herbli to the other hut and found the man lying motionless. When the boy was told that Mr. Kasper would nevermore wake to life, he was dreadfully frightened. The parson closed the little house and returned to the grandmother, from whom he hoped to get some information regarding the dead man's friends and relatives. Herbli came quietly with him.

"I don't know what to do with you, boy," he said, gazing at Herbli, "for it may be several weeks before your uncle comes back. Where shall I put you meanwhile?"

"I'll stay with grandmother," replied Herbli with assurance.

Tears of pure joy rushed to the woman's eyes. "Please leave him here with me, Mr. Parson," she supplicated. "I love him as if he were my son and I promise that no harm shall come to him while he is with me."

The clergyman, glad to know the boy was in good hands till the uncle's return, left Herbli with the old woman, in whom he felt great confidence. He at once took the necessary steps to trace the dead man's relatives, if such were living, but nobody turned up. The man whom nobody knew had to be buried at the cost of the community and his few possessions were to be sold to cover these expenses. Herbli was the sole mourner following the coffin.

The next morning the head of the local board appeared with a clerk in order to receive and remove Mr. Kasper's possessions. The grandmother had told Herbli that they would empty the little house now, and the lad had been watching the proceedings through the open

window. Suddenly the clerk called out, "Come over here, boy, Mr. Parson told us something about the pillows belonging to you. Come here and get them yourself."

The man handed Herbli the upper cushion. "What is this?" he asked suddenly, reaching for a packet which had been pressed very deeply into the second cushion, for the man's head had been lying on it for a long while. A scrap of paper which had lain beside it fluttered to the ground. The man, picking it up, read the following words aloud:

"Mr. Parson:

All you find under my head belongs to the boy, Herbli. See to it that he gets it.

Kasper Wulff."

The man shook his head when he lifted the bag, which tinkled oddly when it was moved. Next he wound a thick string around it in order to close it tightly. Then he said, "This goes to the Parson, for I'll have nothing to do with it."

Herbli dragged his two pillows over to the grandmother, eager to put them at once upon

her bed. But she prevented him from doing so and said, "You mean well, little boy, but you see they must be washed first. Everything must be washed first."

Herbli let them go as soon as the old woman had promised to sleep on both of them as soon as they were clean. He longed to make her comfortable. After two days the pastor in Highwater sent for Herbli. The boy went at once.

"Herbli," said the pastor, "something wonderful has happened. Sit down in front of me, for I have to talk to you. You see," he went on, "the man with whom you were living was not poor. He owned enough to make you comfortable for several years. The bag kept in the pillow under his head was full of paper money, gold and silver-pieces, which altogether make a considerable sum. At your father's death I promised your mother to help her whenever she needed me, and I think the best thing for you to do is to learn something. You have ample means for that now. I'll see that you go to a good school and later on you can

choose a career. You might wish to learn some fine trade."

"I have chosen one already, I want to become a fiddler," declared Herbli.

The pastor had heard that the uncle, Herbli's guardian, had taken the boy away in order to make a violinist of him. But he had had his doubts about this career, for he did not know what sort of life this meant. Also no real goal might be reached. He therefore decided to write to the boy's mother about the present question, and also consult a friend of his, who was a musician.

"For the present," the clergyman continued, "I'll give you some money, Herbli, so you can look after yourself and the good woman. Take some with you now, for she is probably not able to get along very well without a little help."

"Yes, I'll take some," said Herbli. When the parson had placed several large silver-pieces in his hand, the boy held out the other hand, saying, "And fill this one, too."

But the clergyman said warningly, "Why,

Herbli, what do you mean to do with so much? If you intend to squander your money, I won't give you any. You have enough for the food both of you need; it's even more than enough."

Herbli gazed up frankly at the clergyman and answered, "I don't want to squander it, but old people must have strengthening food and drink or they fall into the hands of quacks and doctors and then they lose all they have. I know this from Mr. Kasper and I also know how much the things cost I want to buy."

The clergyman had to laugh a little. Adding more money to what the boy held in his hand, he said, "You can get strengthening food for the grandmother if you want to. It will do her good."

Happy, joyous days followed for Herbli and the grandmother. But when he would return with his bag full of meat, white bread and wine, the same as Mr. Kasper had always bought, she would grow frightened.

However, when the grandmother would worry and say, "Please, little boy, you mustn't

bring so much," Herbli always answered with full assurance, "I know what weak old people must eat, and the parson knew it too."

The two had as much music together as their hearts desired, and the grandmother daily taught a new song to the boy. They were all old tunes, but so beautiful that Herbli never grew tired of playing them.

After a week the clergyman appeared one morning with his friend, and Herbli had to play all the songs, hymns and dances he knew. The gentleman nodded approval several times and finally he clapped his hands. "The boy must go to Leipzic at once, for he will become a great musician," he exclaimed.

The clergyman was delighted over the boy's success. He told Herbli that his mother had written how glad she had been to hear that a way had been opened for her boy to learn music thoroughly. The clergyman and his friend had a mutual acquaintance in Leipzic, a musician who would take Herbli into his house and see to it that the boy studied everything he ought to know besides his music.

Herbli was told in detail about his journey, for he was to set out the following morning. The boy received the necessary funds and felt that, as he had already travelled alone, he would undoubtedly get along. The parson told him to remain good and honest, and the other gentleman, patting the boy's shoulder, once more said, "Be sure to practise well and diligently. Everything depends on that."

The grandmother could not shut her eyes that night but she was unwilling to make the leave-taking hard for Herbli. Yet when he stood before her the next morning with his fiddle under his arm, exactly as he had looked the night he had arrived, she was unable to hold back her tears. Sobbing and crying she exclaimed, "I wish you didn't have to leave me, little boy. You have meant more to me than I can say. I am not only thinking of the happy days you have given me, child; no. You do not know how much good you have done me by your sweet, affectionate ways. I feel years younger and I'll think of these weeks till I die."

"Yes, grandmother, just get younger all the time till I come back and we'll have some more happy days together!" said Herbli, again shaking her hand. When he looked back once more, the grandmother was still standing in the middle of the road, gazing after him and wiping the tears from her eyes. The boy once more waved his little hat and, after another affectionate farewell, disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER TEN YEARS

In the city of Basle a concert was to take place. This was not in itself a notable event, for many concerts are given there, the unusual thing about it was that nobody knew who the young artist was and where he came from. Rumor said that he had lately returned from a lengthy trip to America and that he had given a number of brilliant concerts in several German cities. He had studied first at Leipzic and later in Berlin, and after this he had travelled. The hall was filled to overflowing when the young artist, a slender youth of nineteen or twenty, appeared on the stage. He gazed about with wide-open, honest eyes, and seemed to be looking for someone. Suddenly a smile flitted over his features, as if he had found what he was seeking. Then he began to play. He played some well-known compositions, but something unusual must have been in his play-

ing, because the audience grew constantly more tense. With each piece the applause grew louder, and after the last the applause was so stormy and persistent that the young artist knew he must play an encore.

"It begins like an old hymn," whispered one very attentive listener to his neighbor. But the tones were interwoven so curiously that it seemed to turn into a gay dance, from which mood it grew more soaring and exalted till the melody filled the big hall with triumph and jubilation. Enthusiasm and delight filled the whole assembly and one and all tried to call the young artist back once more. But he did not show himself for the third time; while everybody was clapping and calling for him, he had slipped away unnoticed. Through several narrow side streets he at last reached an important city highway. Here he entered a coffee house and at once went to a small room in the rear of the building. He opened the door. "Here you are already!" he cried joyously, and his voice seemed filled with the same happiness which had throbbed in the last

chords of his composition. "Mother, mother, do you still know me?" he cried, putting his arms about the vigorous woman who stood before him with radiant eyes.

"Herbli, Herbli, is it really you?" she said several times, looking at her son enraptured and unable to take her eyes off his beloved form.

His uncle now approached. He laid his hand on the young artist's shoulder, looking at him as if he were an unearthly appearance. Then he said slowly, "I can't believe it, no, I can't believe that it was you playing in the concert hall. I was in the very back and could hear but not see you. Was it really you, Herbli? Take your fiddle and play me the third piece. I want to see you do it with my own eyes. Will you do it for me?"

"Why not, uncle?" said Herbli willingly. "You were my first teacher and have the first right to my playing. What you want me to repeat is a piece by old Beethoven and the one I love the best of all, myself."

While Herbli played, the uncle stood motion-

less, his eyes, which were fastened on the youthful virtuoso, constantly growing bigger. Large tears rolled down his cheeks. When the last sounds had died away, the uncle once more laid his hand on his nephew's shoulder and said, "Herbli, I won't touch my fiddle any more, for I know now how it ought to sound."

"But uncle, you'll never do that!" exclaimed Herbli. "On the contrary we'll play all day together as soon as we are at Highwater. Just wait and see how your fingers will itch to play all the beautiful things I know, and you'll want to try them, too." In truth the uncle's fingers itched already. Not one of the gentlemen who sought the violinist that evening in order to celebrate his success had an idea that the young man was sitting in a little room behind a modest coffee house, where he told his experiences to a mother radiant with bliss and an uncle completely lost in admiration. Herbli's good spirits were as inexhaustible as the tales he had to tell of the ten years he had spent in many lands. It wasn't necessary to tell them all that day. A letter from Herbli, advising his

mother of his return and the news of his concert in the city, had brought them all three together, for the uncle felt that he must hear his pupil play. He had only done so, however, under condition that Herbli meet him in his own simple quarters, simply refusing to go to the hotel where the young artist was staying. They were to travel together to their old town, where Herbli wanted to resume possession of their former home. The next morning they set out on their journey and stayed together as far as the last slope. Here Herbli left them in order to pay a little visit.

The lovely spring sunshine lay on the two tiny cottages when Herbli at last came to Lowwater. The thick ivy which used to hang over the window of the dark brown hut was gone and on the step at the open door sat two small children, staring at the stranger.

"Everything seems to have changed here, but let us hope not over there," he said, approaching the other cottage. A little hen marched cackling up and down before the window. That was a good sign. Herbli quickly opened the

window. The grandmother sat in her place with a long stocking in her hand. She looked exactly as she had ten years ago except a little older. Herbli seized her with both hands, and the stocking had to be put aside. "Now, grandmother, did I forget you as you prophesied?" he cried, shaking both her hands. He looked so gaily into her eyes that the amazement in her face suddenly broke into loud delight. "Merciful heavens!" she cried. "There is only one in this world with eyes like those. It is my darling little boy! Oh, that I am allowed to see my boy once again!"

"No, no, not just once, but often, grandmother," replied Herbli, holding the old woman's trembling hands. "Everything is settled and you are coming to Highwater to live with mother. She simply must have somebody to take care of, and I won't let her go back to the hospital. I am coming for you with a carriage tomorrow, when we'll pack up all your things, and your little chicken can ride beside you."

The grandmother, who had come secretly to

Lowwater on account of poverty and sorrow, was to be fetched away in comfort and by the boy she had been thinking about for the last ten years. Her great, humble longing had been just to see him once again. "Oh, my boy!" she cried, her voice tremulous with joy, "wasn't it true when I sang:

'On the foaming billow
Rainbow colors pillow

and

God will faithfully requite thee'?"

"Yes, it was, and believe me when I say that I sang the song after you in many, many variations. You shall hear it as soon as you are up with us, grandmother," Herbli said to the old woman, who glanced at him in astonishment. "Farewell till tomorrow," he concluded, once more shaking her hands, which longed to hold him tight. But it was time to go now, as he had promised to return home that day.

"Mother," he cried at the entrance to their old home, "today we must have one of your

wonderful omelets, for nobody in the world can make them like you."

The mother, thrilled that Herbli still remembered her modest dishes, at once set to work.

Outside in the kitchen her son sat down on the corner of the table absorbed in watching his mother beat the eggs. But the mother looked much oftener into her lad's face than at her work. "I can truly look you in the eyes, mother," he said, returning her loving glances, "for I didn't forget any of the things you told me when I used to sit here on this table. Whenever I came to paths I knew you wouldn't like, I always saw you before me, and the look in your eyes was very sad. And as I couldn't stand that, I always ran away from my comrades so they couldn't find me. This made me come back to right ways again."

The grandmother still lives in Highwater, well taken care of by Mrs. Rese. All the year through the two women have endless conversations about Herbli, whom they simply worship.

When the swallows come back in the spring

AFTER TEN YEARS

Herbli returns from his artist tours, and he loves to stay under his mother's and grandmother's roof. For the two women no more beautiful time exists than this. Herbli keeps his childish heart and inexhaustible gaiety, and always fills their hearts with joy. The uncle also appears at this time, for he simply has to hear his nephew play. He then thinks he won't touch his violin again, and his discouragement seems very deep. But just the same, Herbli always manages to make him play, and not only in Highwater, but for the rest of the world.

And the grandmother often says, "When Herbli plays the beautiful piece he has made out of my old song, one feels as if one heard all the angels in heaven singing and rejoicing."

THE END